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Witchcraft in the World Today

C. H. WALLACE

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DEDICATION

To all the Shanoo in the world;
May their numbers and fortunes ever increase.

CHAPTER I

Witchcraft Through the Ages

WITCHCRAFT is as old as mankind.

Through the ages, witchcraft has walked in the shadow of the developing cultures of the human race, sometimes hiding from the limelight but always there, exerting a definite influence. It has empowered the few, terrified the many and sometimes altered the course of history. Right from the beginning, even before the advent of written history, witchcraft has been a murky amalgam of darkness and mystery—the purportedly all-powerful magical knowledge that belonged only to chosen initiates.

Witchcraft has assumed many names and many stances through the centuries—sorcery, conjurism, black art, voodoo, macumba, magic—and its power has been felt in all five continents. No civilization has been altogether free of it, although it has manifested itself far more strongly in some societies than in others.

One cannot begin at the beginning of witchcraft, because that is lost in the ancient mists of time. It is, however, possible to detect signs of sorcery in the earliest artifacts left behind by mankind. Later on, some of the books of the Bible mention witches and sorcerers. Other ancient writings tell of them, too.

The witches cited in early writings were often spoken of as healers, diviners, seers or soothsayers, and they were all assumed to possess hidden and special powers—denied to the average human being—that enabled them to heal or foresee or foretell. Thus, there was a distinction between witches and other people right from the beginning. Also, dating from the beginning, was the question as to whether

witchcraft was good or evil. Over the centuries opinion on this matter has swayed from one end of the pendulum to the other.

But while most people, perhaps, have considered witches to be evil, the early healer-witches and seer-witches were respected for their powers and honored for their knowledge. By and large, they were persecuted only when their cures were somewhat less than successful or their predictions turned out to be either inaccurate or unpopular.

The persecution of witches by the Christian churches in Europe during the Middle Ages, and later in America, was something else again. One point common to both the European and the American persecutions must be underscored—the totally arbitrary way in which the persecutors identified and condemned their hapless victims. We know now that the witch-burning and witch-drowning of these days was far more indicative of the persecutors' sexually warped imaginations than of the victims' magical powers, if indeed any of the condemned ever thought they had such powers at all. Most confessions that were obtained were "confessions by ordeal," that is, confessions obtained by torture.

It is therefore plain that the witch-hunter has played as great a part in the history of witchcraft as the witch herself (or himself). The witch-hunter—and there were many—used the fearful specter of suspected witchcraft to further his own political schemes and ambitions rather than out of a desire to better the human condition. Fanatical fervor, be it religious or any other kind, is always suspect when it involves the persecution of any minority or group, and the witch-hunter of past ages was no exception to the rule. Sexual perversion, political ambition, sadistic lust and other similar characteristics played big roles in the witch-hunters' characters.

It is interesting to note that although the European witch-hunts claimed the lives of hundred of thousands of people, (by fire, by hanging, by drowning) most of them women, it did nothing at all to stop the ancient rites and

lore from being passed on. Unwittingly, the witch-hunters did more than anyone else to propagate witchcraft. And what witches there were—like any other persecuted minority—went underground, hiding their knowledge, their training and their lore from most of the outside world. But they made as sure as they possibly could that this hoarded knowledge was somehow passed on through the years. The belief that the seventh son of a seventh son could cure the palsy by the laying on of hands was still quietly whispered from generation to generation; the old herbal recipes continued to be brewed in dark back kitchens; the ancient curses and invocations were still muttered and memorized—and used.

It is true that eventually the generalized belief in witchcraft and its power began to die down in certain societies. Yet that was not due to the witch-hunters' efforts at all, but rather to the advancement of knowledge.

Scientific knowledge is the one and only factor that has fought steadily against witchcraft and all related forms of sorcery and conjurism, and against the fanatical and self-interested persecutors of witches. For every step forward taken by scientific knowledge, the two ancient enemies have had to take a step back.

It is easy enough to see why. It becomes difficult to accuse a neighbor of having hexed you with magical spots when the doctor has just identified your ailment as a definite case of measles. In the same manner, a farmer whose crops have been hit by a blight no longer seeks the enemy who has cast the evil eye on his land. What he seeks nowadays is the latest and most effective brand of insecticide.

Again, witchcraft loses out to science when both witch and the meteorological bureau predict heavy rainfall (and much of witchcraft is made up of precisely such predictions). In this case, it is true the seer has proved accurate, but the weight of scientific knowledge on the side of the weather bureau tips the scale in its favor. Similar examples are endless.

Thus, one could easily conclude that science and

knowledge and human progress have eliminated witchcraft from today's world.

Or have they?

No. Strangely enough, they have not.

We are already in the second half of the twentieth century, our understanding of man enlarged a thousandfold, our science only a skip and hop away from the stars—and yet magic is still very much a part of our world.

And not only is magic still with us in today's world of jet travel, computerized business and push-button civilization, but the belief and practice of witchcraft is more prevalent than at any time in history since the Middle Ages.

It is widespread in Europe, rampant in Africa, an accepted part of everyday life in the Orient, an oppressive shadow over the Caribbean, well-known throughout South America and, yes, even actively practiced in the United States. If black magic existed only in the underdeveloped parts of the world, the present-day story of witchcraft might not be so amazing. But the facts show that it is not just the inhabitants of the backward nations who indulge in various forms of sorcery. Not by a long shot.

Sex orgies, in the name of devil worship, are held all over the world. Spells can be bought and cast in Rome, Madrid—or New York City. Covens (the required number of thirteen witches to a group) meet regularly in London and Paris. Germany, land of folklore and Volkswagens, is also a land where "devil's dirt" and innumerable love potions are sold over the counter with deadly Teutonic seriousness. The new political leaders in Africa, educated men at the heads of new nations, have been known to use—and fear—witchcraft time and again during the last few years.

The list of examples goes on and on. And to think that this is the Atomic Age.

The post-Atomic Age, really, for we are far beyond the crude, though effective, simplicity of Hiroshima, far more sophisticated than we were during the Bikini blast days.

But our sophistication seems to be a limited one. This must be so if the South American *curandera* is still frequently called in before the doctor, and housewives in the Greater New York area light black candles as they chant ancient incantations in their darkened homes.

The existence of witchcraft in today's world is a weird paradox, but nonetheless it is real. For every scoffer, there is a believer and, frequently, a practitioner of the art.

Much of its following is clandestine, much of it is of the apologetic "I don't really believe in it, *but* . . ." school of thought. And yet there are other followers who will baldly and loudy state their firm views; one's attitude often depends more on the surrounding society than on one's depth of conviction. In England, for instance, the BBC has featured serious talks on witchcraft over its nationwide network. In the United States the approach is rather more hesitant and no one is sponsoring any "How to Hex Your Neighbor" programs as yet. In other parts of the world—Italy, for example—witchcraft is still mainly synonymous with fear, and yet its powers continue to be sought by those who believe.

The word "believe" has more than one meaning. Taking this into consideration, the question "Do you believe in witchcraft?" can be ambiguous. Of course there is such a thing as witchcraft; it is being followed and practiced all over the world. Therefore, it *exists*.

Now, turning to the other meaning of "believe", one comes up against the question of whether witchcraft is *effective* or not. Well, many people obviously believe it is effective; otherwise why would they indulge in its pursuit and practice?

That being the case, one is confronted by the next question.

Why?

CHAPTER II

Why Witchcraft?

THE PATHS that lead to a belief in the effectiveness of witchcraft are many and varied. People from all walks of life make their way along these paths. No one group, no one nation or continent can claim exclusive rights to the belief or following of witchcraft. Education, social standing, heritage or talents—none of these factors alone can account for one's belief, or disbelief, in witchcraft.

The diversity of roads leading to witchcraft is understandable when one realizes that it has a great many related branches. After all, even palm-reading can be thought of as an art related to witchcraft—and few of us have not, at one time or another, cast a sneaky glance at the palms of our hands and wondered what the lines might tell us.

Nonetheless, the turning to witchcraft by people living in Western civilizations has, in recent years, been largely influenced by one particular factor. This factor is the confusion that has reigned, at certain levels, within the structure of organized society.

Man has always needed a certain amount of discipline. Tribal rule, society's dictates, the teachings of any one of a number of churches—all these have supplied him with the subconsciously desired do's and don't's in the past.

It is true that these do's and don't's have varied from place to place and changed from era to era. But the average man didn't do much traveling in the past and the changes in his own society evolved slowly, for the most part, so he could absorb them with relative ease.

Now, after two shattering World Wars, the advent of

the nuclear device, the rapid changes in all areas of living and, above all, the tremendous impact that present-day communications have had all over the world—man is, to say the least, somewhat confused. Things are not what they used to be—sometimes not even what they were yesterday, let alone twenty years ago. The standards laid down for a child no longer hold good by the time he reaches maturity. All is movement, all is change—and there are relatively few people who can take it all with equanimity.

The catch-all phrase "loss of identity" has been kicked around widely and loudly in recent years to explain one of contemporary man's main problems. Loss of identity may be one way of putting it; loss of base may well be another.

By loss of base, I mean a lack of—or a loss of—basic stance, of roots, of continuum from the past. Man is left standing very much on his own and alone. Where is the parent, the tradition, the strength bigger than he is, for him to lean on in his moments of distress or confusion?

Once upon a time, the answer for a great many people would have been the church, but this no longer seems to be so. Despite the much-vaunted so-called religious revival of the past decades, churches stand empty in a great many countries and even if they are filled on specified days of worship, their position as a main base in man's life has withered away considerably.

This does not necessarily mean that man's need for mystic guidance has lessened. But in an age when many churches have lost much of their dignity by stooping to the puerility of such sermons as "Are the Beatles More Popular than God?" and re-writing old hymns to read "Bring Your Sex to Jesus," it is hardly surprising that many who seek mystic guidance should turn elsewhere.

A perfect example of the sort of thing that may well have sent a number of people scurrying in the direction of witchcraft were the many recent discussions on the subject "God is Dead." Hundreds of thousands of words were printed about this, with headlines topping articles in end-

less variations on the theme: "Is God Dead?"; "God is Dead"; "The Death of God"; "God isn't Dead." And on and on and on.

The theory was debated with ferocity at top theological levels. A tight nucleus of Protestant professors wrote searching books on the subject. A rabbi proposed a Jewish equivalent to the theme, holding that "God is where we come from and where we go, but he is just not involved in the world in any way."

Such words are cold comfort to anyone who might have spent much time on his knees in prayerful thanks or supplication. And how does such a phrase affect the many who, alone and afraid, long for the strength of suprahuman belief now?

True, the controversy raged precisely because there was a loud team to oppose it. Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, surely one of the most widely known theologians of all time, was reported to be "coldly unimpressed" with the Death-of-God school of thought, dismissing it as "futile."

But much of the harm was already done, thanks to the efficiency of the communications media. It is one thing for an esoteric theory to be discussed and developed (albeit possibly incorrectly) within small intellectual groups. It is quite another for that same theory to be disseminated throughout the whole world, to be discovered and discussed by vast numbers of theologically untutored people. They may have talked and thought about it with far less knowledge than the ecclesiastical groups, but surely with much more nervousness.

Nervousness. Perhaps, in its own simple way, that word may well be one of the key words. For man is a nervous and guilt-ridden being and much of his behavior stems from this fact. Of course, there are those who hold that man has much to be nervous and guilt-ridden *about*—Dachau, the clubbing of schoolchildren in the South and the bestial cruelty displayed by all concerned in, say, Algeria and Vietnam, are adequate examples. But this still does not alter the fact that man, standing alone in the universe, is small and feels helpless. Nervous. Instinctive-

ly, he wishes to gain assurance from a bigger, weightier source than himself. A power. A parent. A god. *Something.*

And the Death-of-God theory was yet another blow that battered the old traditions and beliefs which had sustained man in the past. It is far easier for common man to grasp and accept his own species' ability to blow the world to smithereens with a doomsday machine than it is to grasp the sudden knowledge of the death of God. To be raised in the belief of an infinite and all-powerful Being and then to be told the Being just kicked the bucket—well, it all makes life that much more confusing, because how can something everlasting be dead, unless it never existed at all?

When one considers that this recent foray into Deicide is but a single example of the sort of shocks man's psyche has recently been taking on the chin, it is quite easy to see why he is a nervous animal.

Naturally, not all the nervous seek their answers in witchcraft. For some, the quest may lead to psychoanalysis and self-knowledge and understanding. For others, the attraction of some way-out cult may prove irresistible. LSD offers a psychedelic crutch to those seeking spectacular revelations at moderate cost, while sundry so-called religious establishments, usually run by a local "god" himself and featuring LOVE very importantly in their doctrine, offer a tempting combination of both temporal and spiritual comfort to the well-heeled seeker-after-truth. Many ordinary men and women just continue bumbling along on their own, nervous as ever but managing somehow. But without the shadow of a doubt, numbers of people will be attracted to the rites and mysteries of some form of witchcraft.

Since the supernatural is unexplained and, as yet, remains inexplicable by science, it seems possible that the truths—or the basic Truth—may well lie somewhere therein. And, since man's eternal quest has always been for answers, for The Answer, to existence, to himself, to

the universe, to everything—the lure of witchcraft in its many guises is readily understandable.

All these factors apply to the sort of witchcraft believer and practitioner who comes from a big American or European city. An entirely different species is the jungle-village witch doctor in Africa, whose beliefs were instilled in him since birth and who attained his full powers in ritual initiation ceremonies. Somewhere between the two lies the type of witch exemplified by the sweet-faced old lady sitting by the fire in an old Scottish cottage.

"Oh, aye, of course, I'm a witch," she'll tell you, the burr of her accent soft and pleasant. "You see, I was born on Christmas and that always gives one the power."

The power, the gift. The craft. Those are only three of the many names one hears used to describe the centuries-old practice that so stubbornly refuses to die, even when faced with the searching light of modern science. And the seeming paradox of a Christmas birth meaning possession of witchcraft powers does not bother witchcraft practitioners one bit. Nor is that particular belief purely a Scottish one.

Years ago, in Argentina, I met a woman whose birthday happened to be December 24. She had recently moved into our district and she told me that she had spoken to her other new neighbors across the hedge that divided their gardens. It was mid-December—which is mid-summer down at that end of the world—and polite conversation was made about the upcoming Christmas holidays.

Somehow, the question of my friend's Christmas birthday came up, and the woman next door reacted violently to the news. She seemed part fearful, part pleased, and begged to come over and discuss something serious later on in the evening. Mystified, my friend agreed.

It turned out that the neighbor was firmly convinced that because of her birthday, the woman must be a witch. However, she wanted to know how powerful a witch; was she, perhaps, the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter? No, came the answer. She had one sister, that was all.

"What a pity," sighed the woman. "In that case, I doubt that you are powerful enough to help me."

It turned out that the neighbor's brother was suffering from a lingering illness that, according to her, could be cured only by a very powerful variety of witch. My friend was not the right kind; it was regrettable, but it was so.

"But, of course," she added before leaving, "I shall turn to you for help when something occurs that happens to be within your scope."

A Scot of Celtic descent is far removed from an Argentine of Spanish heritage. And yet, the ancient beliefs link firmly, unchanged despite the obvious traveling their carriers must have done.

And, since it seems to be such a strange and ephemeral thing, perhaps at this point we might ask: exactly what *is* witchcraft?

CHAPTER III

Magic: Black or White?

CONJURE UP, if you will, the image of a very large and perfect diamond. It is solid, multifaceted, brilliant—and very, very valuable. If a light shines on it the diamond will shoot back lights in diverse directions. Depending on the angle of the beam, it may act as a prism, causing a rainbow to be projected on the nearest surface.

The diamond is, of course, capable of cutting glass. Or another diamond. Also, since it is so very valuable, it possesses a certain type of power—the power to acquire things. A part of its worth could be used to buy food, or a tract of land, or more jewels or a man's hours of labor. Or his death.

But none of these things can a diamond do on its own. Someone—a human being—must use it, implement its worth, translate its value into action before its power as a priceless gem is realized. Otherwise, it just sits there, beautiful, and priceless—but inert. Even its beauty must be displayed in the light if it is to have any esthetic value. On its own in the dark, a diamond, no matter how valuable, is simply another molecular structure.

Witchcraft can be thought of in much the same way. For those who believe in its power, it is precisely that—a power. Call it an energy, if you like, a force—which, in a sense, comes close to giving it scientific reality or, at least, possibility.

In its intrinsic state, witchcraft is neither good nor evil. It just is. Like the diamond, it must be implemented for its power to be activated. That is, the power always exists but it cannot be used until someone with enough know-

how taps it, draws off a personal supply and then makes it function.

Another definition compares witchcraft to atomic power—a sobering thought in more ways than one. But the invisible aspects of both do, perhaps, further the similarity, and the power to make things move by force of will also enters the general picture.

I am, of course, using the word "witchcraft" in instances where others might wish to quibble and put such terms as "sorcery" in its place. For, if one wishes to split hairs, witchcraft is the craft or art of witchery, sorcery or magic. In other words, it is the *craft* and not the *force,* the way of implementing and not the material used. Nonetheless, I shall stick to my guns and continue to use the word in its broadest meaning.

Another way of looking at the power of witchcraft and defining it is to consider it a matter of will. Mary Quant, the fabulously successful British designer, originator of the Mod movement, states in her autobiography, *Quant by Quant,* that as a child, she began to believe she was a witch. She did so because she was firmly convinced she could *will* things to happen and, in the course of her book, cites examples.

If success is any measure of will power—and it is safe to assume that it is largely so—then her ability to will her success was indeed a sign of power. That she channeled it into the field of fashion—an excessively modern, non-witchlike-sounding area—is neither here nor there. Witchcraft has always been used to influence something else. Pure witchcraft, unlike pure science, does not exist. It is an applied craft, to be used for a purpose, be it foretelling someone's future or hexing them or casting out a malevolent spirit, i.e. healing something or someone.

The thought of willing something to happen is one that has crossed almost everybody's mind at one time or another. Children, less restricted and mentally regimented than adults, often indulge freely in the idea. When it does not work, they will often say, "That's because I didn't wish hard enough," or explain that, although they tried to will

something, they didn't really believe they could do it and that is why their wish did not come true.

Nor are adults entirely free from this line of thought. So general is it that someone once wrote a song called "Wishing Will Make It So." There are other songs that touch on the subject, too. The generality of the thought, on a world-wide basis, gives credence to the theory that it is an atavistic memory—a hidden leftover in our makeup from many thousands of years ago.

However, let us return to that amorphous mass of inert power waiting to be used. The gift—that is, the thing that makes a witch—is the ability to harness this power and drive it in a chosen direction.

Here, the similarity to electricity steps in, and there are those who will compare the two or explain witchcraft as "personal magnetism" as though a witch has an electrical field around her or him (for "witch" is a perfectly acceptable term for a male sorcerer, too). It seems that witchcraft and scientific knowledge march in parallel lines, never veering to meet, but with the possibility of doing so in space (if one accepts the mathematical theory of parallel lines).

Before elaborating on what makes a witch, it should be pointed out that here we have come to a possible summation of both witches and witchcraft. As in *Cogito—ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), we can now see we are faced with *Credo—ergo est* (I believe, hence it is).

Beliefs are very hard to argue about. It is equally true that one man's belief is another man's nonsense. But sometimes the nay-sayer is forced to concede that there was more to the "nonsense" than first met his eye. Consider the case of a group of Indian believers.

Witchcraft is as rife in India as it is anywhere else in the world. It may masquerade under another set of names, ones we might find unfamiliar, but the signs and fringe benefits are all there to be recognized. In certain sections of India, witch doctors (we shall call them that to avoid terminology confusion) had for years—literally thousands of years—used certain rites and preparations to

cast out evil spirits that unfortunately had a habit of taking up abode in the human body, manifesting themselves in a violent and distressing manner. A certain concoction was always used for the cure; the witch doctors swore by its miraculous powers.

It does not take too much imagination to hear the kind of belly laughs Western medicine got out of this one. Old men sitting around muttering incantations and brewing up old roots—the biggest laugh of the year.

Until the day that that same root, rauwolfia, became the very valid root of a whole new branch of medicine. Its derivatives were the first of the tranquilizers—and who will deny that these do indeed cast out evil spirits from the human body?

Then there were the witches in the west of England who knew that the magic cure for infected wounds was moldy cheese bound over the festering sore. The cure was scoffed at by disbelievers until the day science discovered that certain molds contain a healing agent called penicillin.

So when it comes to another man's belief, it may be all very well to laugh gently but it is highly advisable to take a good look first to see whether there is not a grain of truth hidden under the apparent mumbo-jumbo.

Witches, of course, know better than to laugh. But—who is a witch? And can you tell one if you meet one?

If you consult professed witches in trying to clarify who is a witch and what makes a witch, you will meet with two schools of thought. One school adheres to the motto: I believe I am, therefore I am. But it must be a true and deep-seated belief, otherwise it does not count and is mere sham. What is more, the adherents of this school say the one who is shamming *knows* he or she is shamming and will not get very far anyway.

But *how* does one actually know whether or not one is a witch?

"You just know," is the inevitable although very unsatisfactory answer generally given. "And from a very early age, because it is a gift that has been there from birth."

The second school of thought says nonsense, one can *learn* to be a witch. This statement is enough to set the first group into a loud and denying howl, and the best thing for non-witches to do is sit back and watch the argument rage. In all fairness, it must be said that the first crew have an edge over the second, if only because they sound far more convincing through the sheer force of their uncompromising belief. And there one comes to the power again: the positive force of firm conviction.

Are there any outward signs that indicate who is a witch? Looking around a crowded room, would it be possible to discern certain physical attributes in a person that would mark him as a sorcerer?

The answer is, not really. There is a slight confusion here—as in so many elements of witchcraft—because a few centuries ago there *were* so-called witch marks. The only trouble was that they were designated thus by the witch-*hunters* and not by the witches themselves, and since the motives of the witch-hunters are known to have been both highly suspect and totally self-interested, their definitions of witch marks are quite inaccurate.

Moles in certain parts of the body were defined in those days as definite witch marks. This stemmed from the belief that the devil suckled from witches, as did incubi and succubi, the two last being nightmarish productions of the lurid imagination of those times. Since they could not suckle from normal teats, being abnormal beings, they had to be supplied with a third teat somewhere on a witch's body. To escape detection, this teat was disguised as a wart or mole.

Another witch mark, restricted to young witches, was, strangely enough, the mark of great beauty. The motivation behind this on the part of the witch persecutors is easy enough to work out: either deep jealousy on the part of another woman, or vicious lust on the part of a man.

In other words, the witch-hunters tended to pick their victims first and then shape the betraying marks to fit the immediate need. Warts and moles could be used to dispose of the older generation, male or female; beauty took

care of the younger females. Young males were not often accused of witchcraft; they were too essential to the community for fighting wars or tilling the soil. Indeed, men were seldom picked out for this particular type of persecution. There were other methods with which to dispose of them during those dark times.

Left-handedness was also highly suspect, as was, at certain peak hysteria times, the ability to swim. This was because witches were supposedly unable to drown, which led to one of the most horrendous forms of twisted logic and injustice ever to be perpetrated.

Since a witch could not drown, the theory was that the way to test whether someone was a witch or not was to try and drown her. If, perchance, the poor woman was held under water somewhat too long and did finally drown, the witch-hunters piously pronounced that she had repented at the last moment and thus become a normal—and therefore drownable—soul again. Tails we win, heads you lose, might well have been the witch-hunters' slogan through the years.

As mentioned earlier, the seventh child of a seventh child would certainly be marked as a witch. The same would apply to a child born in a caul. This belief, in a modified form, is still with us today in certain parts of the world, Scotland for one, since it is said that a child born in a caul will never drown. However, the hexing inheritance connected to cauls seems to have disappeared in the last hundred years.

It is said that a witch cannot cry—and cannot love. That a witch loves *counting*; for example, counting how many steps there are on a staircase, or the number of paving stones on a street, or the number of trees alongside a road. It is said that a witch suffers nausea if forced to enter a church. And that she cannot die unless she is buried at midnight, at a crossroads, with a stake through her heart.

In former times, an affinity with certain animals was a complete giveaway, and this belief seems to have survived in a distorted form. For general misconception about

witches is that they must have some creature who acts as a "familiar," specifically, a cat. Halloween drawings, for example, always show cats perched on the ends of witches' broomsticks as they go soaring through the air. Black cats are particularly singled out by the uninformed as being definitely connected to witchcraft. Depending on what country you come from, chances are you believe (or suspect, way down deep inside) that black cats are lucky or unlucky—but definitely one or the other.

The truth of the matter lies in a somewhat different direction and goes very far back into history, back to the days of Solomon.

It is said that Solomon was the wisest man of his time and possibly of all time. Few things were mysteries to him and he is supposed to have possessed many remarkable gifts. One of these was the ability to "talk" to animals. Perhaps if we think of that as the ability to communicate with animals, the idea becomes less preposterous, since we have all known people who seem to have a way with animals and who are admired for their ability to train dogs, or parakeets, or chimpanzees or whatever.

According to the legend of Solomon, he put a special ring on his right index finger when he wished to talk to animals, for the magic power was contained in the ring and the animals knew it. This particular aspect of the story survives to this day in the field of palmistry, where a certain line—not often found in its entirety—is called "King Solomon's Ring." A person is considered to have a way with animals, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on how completely or incompletely the line is etched on his hand.

It may very well be that a witch has such a line clearly etched on her hand, for she is likely to have an affinity with animals, or sometimes with just one animal that she uses as her familiar or contact. But the familiar is not necessarily a cat; it can be any animal at all. Indeed, one of the most famous contemporary witches says her familiar is a jackdaw and she has even written a book about him.

There are recorded instances of many different animals being used as familiars, from birds to horses, but it seems that a horse would be somewhat awkward to have around a house, and therefore impractical as a familiar. Hence the usual choice of smaller animals, even in the Middle Ages.

The singling out of cats as the animals that were always witches' familiars is again attributable to the witch-hunters. And *their* reason for picking cats turns out to be psychological rather than logical when examined in the light of recent psychiatric studies.

According to these studies, there is a definite correlation between aelurophobia, i.e. a morbid fear and hatred of felines (and this can be extended to include all small, furred animals), and deeply buried homosexual tendencies. When one considers that sadism and brutality are also linked to the same psychological problems, one gets another vivid glimpse into the warped mentalities that made witch-hunters.

This again emphasizes the influence that the witch-hunters had in promoting, distorting and altogether blowing up into preposterous proportions various aspects of witchcraft as it existed in their times. The hunters are among the major factors that make it so difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to define and delineate witchcraft without all these side excursions and explanations.

To make another attempt at definition: what, then, is witchcraft?

It is, in fact, the perfect paradox. It is—and it is not. It always was—and yet never has been. It exists—yet is a mythical nothingness.

In other words, it is a belief. And according to those who believe it, gives its power—the power—to those who believe. To whose who do not believe in it, witchcraft is nothing but a sex-ridden emotional fantasy, a nonsensical mumbo-jumbo indulged in by the superstitious, the psychotic, the illiterate and the quack.

But it should be noted that energy can be described in very similar terms and to describe pure energy to a firm non-believer might prove to be a hard task indeed. After

all, energy cannot be *seen*. Only its results can be observed.

Following the same tack, it does not behoove the nonbelievers to deny the existence of witchcraft too loudly. For there is far too much evidence of active, forceful witchcraft at work around the world today for it to be dismissed quite as lightly as certain people would like it to be dismissed. In fact, the dismissers sometimes sound almost like the hunters of yore who got all their "facts" either from their own warped minds or who hopelessly confused the real facts and kept on howling about eradicating witchcraft—while failing entirely to stamp it out.

CHAPTER IV

Socialized Sorcery

TODAY there are an estimated thirty thousand witches in the British Isles.

Now, thirty thousand of anything is a pretty large number, be they people or petunias or pachyderms. And, when it comes to the number of witches in a relatively small land area, the figure is impressive, indeed. What is more, the estimate is said to be on the conservative side, which gives one further pause for thought.

Since the above figures point to a witch-conscious country, let us start our global sorcery-seeking by landing in England. And because chances are one would land at London Airport, one might as well begin the survey of sorcery right in Britain's capital city.

There are enough people living in London, or close to London, who are deeply interested in witchcraft for there to be many bookshops specializing in this subject alone. One of these stores makes its stock in trade obvious by having the word MYSTIKBUKS as its cable address. Another deals mostly with volumes on African and Eastern sorcery. A third mixes all occultism together higgledy-piggledy in its dark and cobwebby corners.

To browse through some of these bookshops—the traveling reader will find a good selection of them in the Charing Cross area—is to be overwhelmed by the number and scope of volumes, papers, treatises and textbooks they house. Cabalistic dictionaries, guides to ceremonial magic and studies of amulets, talismans and the evil eye jostle against heavy encyclopedias of witchcraft and demonology and similar weighty tomes. The prices can be weighty,

too, adding evidence to the seriousness with which mystically inclined shoppers take their witchcraft. One volume on alchemy is a fifty-dollar item and it is by no means the most expensive. Old and rare volumes on witchcraft can command fantastic prices. An average volume will probably cost more than one would expect to pay for a Bible.

A glance at a selection of titles helps to explain witchcraft's wide range, also, perhaps, its wide appeal. *The Vampire in Europe* is said to be a steady seller, as is *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin,* a related volume by the same author. Another of the fifty-dollar items is entitled *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft* and it might be described as an Early English witch's manual. Books by witches are also available in abundance. The late G. B. Gardner, England's chief witch during his lifetime, is almost always represented by at least one volume per bookshop.

Not all the authors whose books line the shelves are natives of the British Isles. Not by a long shot. Many nationalities are represented in the various bookshops. Sometimes, the authors write about the witchcraft and magic of their native lands. At other times, their works are general studies or guides, compilations or compendiums of witchcraft in its wider sense.

Historical studies of the subject are also available. A volume entitled *The Secret Teaching of All Ages,* which is a hefty book encompassing an impressive amount of occult knowledge, is the work of an American, Manly Palmer Hall. Other works of his can also be found from time to time, notably his studies on the Comte de St. Germain whose evil figure is inexorably included in any work on the European history of witchcraft.

So much for the availability of information on witchcraft in London—the who, what, why, where, when and how-to of the black arts that takes up so many crowded shelves. What about the practice of witchcraft itself?

There is absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind—and this includes the minds of the local police—that many covens can and do meet frequently and regularly all over

the Greater London area. It is simply one of the accepted facts of contemporary life not only in London but all over the British Isles. Since it is considered so commonplace, not all instances of witchcraft are reported in the newspapers. Only the more flagrant occurrences get into print; and those that do make the printed page range widely in mood and in manner.

One of the latest items to attract public attention was the newspaper ad, placed by a duke, for a witch with powers to "restore the fortunes" of his family. The nobleman in question, the Duke of Leinster, comes from a family on which a curse was placed many years ago. The electronic age apparently not having solved the Duke's problems, witchcraft entered the picture via the modern expedient of a personal ad in a national newspaper. The job outlined in the ad was the laying of a curse. Only experts, it was stated, need apply.

Curses are not the only things which are ritually undone in England these days. Ghosts have also been in the direct line of fire. Ghosts are more tricky to lay than mere curses and it takes the approval of a bishop or the bishop himself to do the job properly, according to canon law. As for the services themselves, one contains such lines of comfort as: "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night," thus extending solace to both the wandering spirit and to those who have been disturbed by its wanderings.

"Unusual? Well, yes, it is," admitted a Church of England spokesman, when the celebrated case of Albert the Ghost appeared in the daily tabloids. "But a service for exorcism does exist. It is perfectly valid."

The case of Albert the rambunctious ghost took place in a corner of England where a certain prayer is often found stitched on samplers:

> O Lord, save us from the ghosts and ghoulies
> And things that go bump in the night.

There are variants of this wording, but the main theme is

always the same. Albert may well have read it during his earthly days. During his ghost stage, he most certainly succeeded in going bump in the night. He also had many other disturbing habits, as Mr. and Mrs. John Durston, Albert's unwitting and unwilling landlords, found out. The Durstons, newlyweds at the time, had taken an apartment in a converted country mansion. As they told their vicar in the village of Abbotskerswell, in Devon, life had been somewhat unusual for them from the moment they moved in.

Furniture moved from one place to another. Ornaments changed habitat. The radio went on and off, untouched by human hands. And most frightening of all, a misty figure could be seen from time to time, swirling around the apartment. Albert seemed shy about materializing in full. But he swirled around mistily like a cloud, chilling the atmosphere and troubling the innocent Durstons.

The village vicar, the Reverend Gordon Langford, investigated the matter at the urgent request of his parishioners. He must have been well satisfied of Albert's existence because he reported the matter to his superiors. The affair of Albert reached a climax when the bishop for the region, Dr. Robert Mortimer, decided to lay the ghost himself. The half-hour ceremony of exorcism took place on a Sunday and as everyone had expected it worked.

But only up to a point. When last heard of Albert had taken to showing up in another apartment, also part of the converted mansion. And, according to various reports, Albert is getting bolder in his materialization. He appears as a man in Edwardian clothes, a far cry from his former misty shapes. But he has complied with the rules of the game and has never returned to the apartment occupied by the young Durstons. It would thus seem that both materialization and rationalization lie within the scope of the ghostly world.

More totally effective and far more strongly worded was the curse pronounced by another churchman on worshippers of black witchcraft. Church curses on witchcraft practitioners offer no comfort whatsoever: "May their days

be of anguish and sorrow," was the wording used recently.

This full-blooded curse was thundered out against black mass practitioners by the Reverend Ernest Streete, rector of a church in Bramber, Sussex. The reason for his ire was evident in the churchyard. Graves had been desecrated and black mass symbols marked around the church. Nor was it the first incident of black magic vandalism in the area. In 1963, a devil worship ceremony was conducted—and discovered—in another Sussex church nearby. The participants escaped but evidence of their cultist rites remained in the church. Because of the "obscene and ungodly" nature of the interrupted ritual, the church altar had to be re-hallowed, an Anglican ritual so rare as to be almost forgotten in modern times.

Because of these local happenings, the Rev. Streete did not listen to those who protested his plan to use the almost extinct curse on the local desecrators. What's more, he claims it worked. The tombstone cross that had been broken was returned to its grave and all the witchcraft marks—hex signs of varying kinds—were erased one night shortly after the curse was pronounced.

The liturgical curse having had its desired effect, the Rev. Streete kept his word and lifted it.

"They came back and showed repentance by straightening things up," he said, referring to what he called the "black magic crowd." "It's all closed now."

Observers maintain that he made it obvious he would use the curse again should any further outbreaks of black magic occur within his parish.

In Clophill, a charming rural area of Bedfordshire, the skeleton of a teen-age girl was found propped up on the altar of an ancient church. The skull, separated from the rest of the skeleton, was on top of a metal stake that had been dug into the floor of the church.

"Obviously a case of black magic worship," was the immediate opinion of eyewitnesses. "Several people must have been involved—very probably thirteen."

Thirteen is the required number of persons to form a

coven, a witches' clique, and major ceremonies must be attended by at least a full coven.

Investigation showed that the girl's skeleton had been disinterred from a nearby cemetery. Her tomb was dated 1770 and was one of many that had been opened and violated. The fact that her skeleton had been used, plus the fact that the grave-robbing occurred at a time of full moon, added to the conviction that devil worshippers were responsible.

A few months later, a picturesque village in Norfolk was jolted out of its quiet bucolic existence when black magic death symbols suddenly showed up. They were pinned to the door of a ruined castle which lies in the village, giving the place its name, Castle Rising.

Two pink effigies, crudely made but unmistakably meant as a man and a woman, were nailed to the door. Thorns pierced them and the heart between them. On the ground nearby were cabalistic markings, meaning death.

As is usually the case in England, no one pressed any charges, although the incident was fully investigated, just like the Clophill affair.

"After all," argued a villager, "no one's been harmed, have they?"

But under that type of casual remark frequently lies the unspoken thought that it is best to leave such things alone. No one has been harmed—yet . . .

All Souls' Eve marked the date when the Berkshire village of Appleton was visited by a group of black magic cultists. They limited their activities to the graveyard, moving headstones, tearing down a cross and leaving cabalistic signs traced in gravel and marble chippings. The occurrence was likened to the outbreak of witchcraft at Clophill but in the Appleton case, no altar desecration took place.

Not even Royalty is able to escape from the signs of witchcraft in England today. Black magic symbols were found on the royal estate at Sandringham, one of the Queen's several residences. The symbols were found less than three miles from Sandringham House itself. Similar

to the findings at Castle Rising (and, incidentally, Castle Rising is only about ten miles from Sandringham) was a clay effigy of a naked woman. A hawthorn was stuck into the clay, piercing the figure's breast. Nearby were more thorns and a black candle.

Mr. Frank Buckley, an authority on witchcraft from nearby King's Lynn, took one look at the symbols and identified them immediately.

"A rather crude death charm," he said, referring to the assortment of objects. Crude, no doubt, but a death symbol nonetheless, and security measures around Sandringham House were tightened while the subsequent investigation was conducted. No findings were made public.

Brighton, a resort on England's south coast, was once reputed to be a hotbed of black magic cultists, but actual investigation showed this to be an exaggeration. One or two famous witches (by famous witches I mean those whose names are known to the general public) have lived there, however. And there are, without doubt, a couple of resident covens in Brighton. There is also a group—small at present but growing larger—of practitioners of West Indian witchcraft which is related to, but not identical with, the British variety. Even so, there is much less witchcraft practiced in Brighton than in London, an hour's ride away by train.

Another seaside city where practicing covens definitely exist is Southampton. Few outsiders were aware of this until the famous "Headache Cure" case made the facts obvious.

Mrs. Pat Mallon, a Southampton resident, was chatting to Michael Fish, an acquaintance, in a pub one day. During the conversation, Mrs. Mallon happened to mention that she had a headache. It was this chance remark that made Mr. Fish tell her about a cure for headaches he knew about—and apparently believed in very strongly. Mrs. Mallon, on the other hand, did not find it so easy to believe in his cure. So Mr. Fish showed her the *proof*.

Pushing aside his hair with his hand, he told her to look at the top of his head.

"I was amazed—and horrified," Mrs. Mallon later recounted. For she had seen a nail sticking out of his head. It was only sticking out; the greater part was firmly embedded. Although Mr. Fish seemed to be well and claimed he suffered no pain at all, Mrs. Mallon persuaded him to go to a hospital. Doctors were not impressed by the Headache Cure either; they rushed Michael Fish to a brain surgery center in Surrey. There, surgeons removed the nail successfully. Had it traveled another eighth of an inch into his head during the Headache Cure Mr. Fish would not have lived to tell Mrs. Mallon his strange story.

Investigation proved this cure to have been part of a ritual, a form of magical medicine being practiced at some levels of witchcraft.

Perhaps witchcraft's most puzzling aspect to the uninitiated is the multiplicity of its facets. In fact, there are so many different, intriguing forms of witchcraft that enough curiosity has been aroused for the formation of various laymen's study groups, among them a course "for housewives only"!

The course, given by a lecturer from Britain's Birmingham University, was sponsored by the Staffordshire County Council and was a seriously accepted project. The lecturer, Mr. Michael Rix, included information on spells, toads and a guide to the assorted practitioners of witchcraft (warlocks, witches and sorcerers).

Another lecturer on the subject of witchcraft is, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, the rector of a church. The Rev. William D. Williams does not give a course as such but he talks to groups and clubs, frequently women's clubs. Mr. Williams, who is extremely well versed in the subject, has been accused from time to time of frightening his audience. He points out that he does not "set out to frighten people deliberately." Mr. Williams continues, "But I admit I often scare them. It is the subject which is disturbing, not me."

There are some people who claim the British Government is partly responsible for the present resurgence of witchcraft in Britain! Shortly after World War II, during a general revamping and updating of outmoded laws on the statute books, the anti-witchcraft laws were repealed. It is still an open question whether the possibility of practicing sorcery without fear of legal retribution has actually increased activity in the cult or not.

But if the witchcraft scene in England is disturbing, there are other countries where witchcraft is much more disturbing still. For a look at one of these countries, perhaps one of the most vivid examples today, we cross the Channel, go deep into Europe and land in—Germany.

CHAPTER V

Witchcraft Uber Alles

THERE IS a dark, brooding aspect to the German national soul which is reflected in the forms of that country's witchcraft today.

And, for that matter, not only today. Turn back the clock, the calendar, the centuries—and the picture remains basically the same. Nationwide hysteria, persecution, organized brutality—all bound up with so-called folk culture and sorcery. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, several waves of witch-hunting rolled over Europe. But nowhere else did they reach the proportions they reached in Germany.

During the seventeenth century alone, over a *hundred thousand* accused witches were systematically tortured and put to death within the boundaries of Deutschland. Of course, this number pales beside the eleven million people who were to suffer similar fates at the hands of the Germans about three hundred years later, but, for the 1600's, a hundred thousand was a large number. This wholesale slaughter did not, however, stamp out witchcraft and, as elsewhere, those who actually practiced sorcery managed to pass on their teachings and beliefs.

The witchcraft that secretly survived, to thrive again in contemporary times, lies beneath the veneer of gemutlichkeit and efficiency characteristic of the nation. It is under this same thin veneer that the interaction of sentimentality and sadism, a highly combustible combination of emotions which seems to be an intrinsic part of the German soul, plays such a telling role. And it manifests itself most clearly in the practice of witchcraft.

There is little erudition in German witchcraft. The lightness of spirit of those who follow the Dianic cults in other countries is also lacking. In fact, there is practically no interest in the intricate forms of magic and rites of other lands. Heavy-handed and pragmatic, German practitioners can be divided into two main groups: sado-masochistic devil-worshippers and peasant-level spell-throwers or sorcerers.

Members of the first group are not true witchcraft practitioners. They have merely taken some of the trappings of witchcraft and molded them to suit their own needs, which are purely sexual—and usually perverted. Their rituals are those of their own lurid invention and many are partly taken from the duelling-scar-tradition days.

Whips, black leather thongs, black candles and thin chains figure among the paraphernalia used by these specialized devil-worshippers. Most of the members of the many groups are men, although there are women members, too. Homosexuality, sado-masochism, sexual experimentation and outright brutality figure largely in the rites.

There are no reliable statistics on the number of people involved in the present-day German devil cults. The societies are secret and the members sworn to silence but, all the same, word leaks out from time to time. Also, owing to the brutality and sado-masochistic activities indulged in by members, it is inevitable that every so often doctors—if not the police—have to be called in, to clean up after ritual excesses. This is another way in which the groups become known. What is also known is that the devil cultists are mostly city dwellers and that the largest and possibly the best-established groups are to be found in Hesse.

This in itself is noteworthy, for Hesse has another claim to fame. It is the seat—or the heart, if such a delicate term is appropriate in this context—of the resurgence of Nazism in Germany today.

Is there a connection between this form of German

witchcraft and the murky Nazi mentality? Psychiatric experts firmly believe so; the link is said to be the deeply hidden but firmly embedded homosexual nature of those who follow either the devil sex cult or the Nazi political philosophy.

This links them to the witch-*hunters* of yore, who also displayed manifestations of suppressed homosexuality.

Yes. The links are there without a doubt.

Now let us turn and look at the other form of present-day German witchcraft. The Hessian criminal police gazette has stated that "Criminal superstition in Germany is more frequent now than at any time in the past fifty years." The Hessians, by the looks of things, should be in a position to know. But there is another voice raised in protest against the current practice of witchcraft in Germany.

Johann Kruse is a retired teacher. Mild-spoken and intellectual, he is an expert on German witchcraft and the founder of a private archive of witchcraft research in Hamburg. Herr Kruse has been involved in the study of witchcraft for more than forty years and he is the author of the famed report on the subject for the United Nations. He compares Germany today to the darkest Middle Ages.

Now, as then, he maintains, "almost every town in Germany has its witch and almost every village its devil's servant.

"This mania," he continues, "still morally corrupts many people. It breaks up families and leads to persecution."

The link between witch and witch-hunter in Germany becomes obvious once more in this context.

Kruse says there are no reliable statistics but there is ample evidence of the havoc village witchcraft creates in Germany.

"Suicides, cripples, mental conditions, sex crimes, profanation of corpses," are among the results the expert attributes to current sorcery.

Proof that witchcraft is rife can be most often found in German courts of law. The law becomes directly concerned with sorcery time and again—and not necessarily in a punitive, police-action manner. Lawsuits—actual, argued cases of law—involving witchcraft reach the courts every month.

Such legal action is hardly considered worth extra comment in the local newspapers, for German witchcraft is rather commonplace, at least on the village and small-town level. Should a court case in any other European country involve witchcraft—and occasionally such cases do arise, infrequent as they may be—it would become a press sensation overnight. Not so in Germany. It is simply accepted as part of everyday life.

The defendants in these cases are either practicing witch doctors ("malpracticing witch doctors" might be a better term) or witch-hunters, who may be witches themselves. Those who play the double role of witch and witch-hunter invariably argue that they were called in to lay the spell cast by another witch. Or to banish a "bad" witch from the village. The witch-hunter defendant claims, naturally, to be a "good" witch.

Again the Nazi parallel arises. The post-World War II saying: "I was not the Nazi—it was my brother Hans" rings a similar note.

A somewhat different set of circumstances were brought to light at the trial of Johann Vogel in the early 1960's. Vogel, then twenty-six years old, was sentenced to prison by a Bamberg, North Bavaria, court for the attempted murder by burning of a sixty-four-year-old woman.

The attempted killing took place in the village of Mailach in Hesse. Vogel set fire to Elisabeth Hahn's small house, fully meaning the flames to engulf her. Fortunately, the elderly woman escaped, but the house was burned to the ground.

Vogel apparently believed that the illnesses he had been suffering were the result of a spell cast on him by Frau Hahn. Death by fire is one of the accepted modes of

destroying a witch. To Vogel, it seemed as simple as one-plus-one. In addition, there were extenuating circumstances, as the court itself recognized. During the proceedings, it quickly became clear that the whole village firmly believed in witchcraft. The townspeople's behavior towards the old woman had been little short of heinous.

Actually, Elisabeth Hahn was "a harmless old person who needed human kindness." This opinion was delivered from the bench by the presiding judge at Vogel's trial. And the evidence of the villagers' cruel, superstitious behavior mounted. They had even gone so far as to hire a witch doctor from the outside to come to Mailach and nullify the supposed spells cast by the unfortunate old woman.

During the trial, the practice of witchcraft in Germany was discussed at length. The hundreds of witch doctors earning large sums of money by manipulating the fears of the superstitious also entered the discussion. People lacking religion, it was stated, are prone to turn to witchcraft. They are prompted by a desire to believe in the supernatural; they are prompted by diverse factors which include increased affluence, better communications and an increased rate of change in all areas of life—but insufficient means to understand and cope with modern life as it rapidly evolves.

Another village witchcraft case dealt with the Rundel family. Lorenz Rundel, a farmer, bought some cows and soon decided they were not giving enough milk. Gehlen, the village where he lived, boasted a resident witch doctor, one Hermann Dreher. Rundel went to see Dreher and told him his problems.

Apart from their low production of milk, Rundel explained, the cows had given birth to calves that had died almost immediately. He then confided that he had another problem as well: he and his wife wanted a child but had as yet been unsuccessful.

Witch doctor Dreher listened and then gave his opinion. It was all quite simple, he pronounced.

"Your bad luck is caused by witchcraft. I can chase the demons away—for a fee."

The fee was a stiff one—nearly the equivalent of two hundred U.S. dollars—and the witch doctor's instructions were complicated.

Farmer Rundel followed Dreher's directions implicitly. First he "cleansed" his farm, using milk to draw big crosses on all the walls. Then he made a mixture of flour and spiders (yes, spiders) and put it in the cows' fodder. Large stars cut out of brown paper were pasted around the barn. All this accomplished, Rundel sat back and waited for the magic to work.

The spell to get the farmer's wife to conceive apparently required the expert's touch. Witch doctor Dreher handled it himself. Frau Rundel was made to lie on a bed while he marked a cross of milk on her breasts. Then he covered her with a sheet of sacking. Incantations would take care of everything else.

Strangely enough, the farmer's wife did conceive but the pregnancy was terminated by a miscarriage. As far as the cows were concerned, however, none of the spells worked. Rundel complained to the witch doctor. The magic had not been strong enough.

But Dreher had an explanation. Nothing was wrong with his magic—but bad witchcraft was working against him. He knew exactly where it was coming from, too.

"The trouble is your wife," Dreher told the farmer. "She is a witch."

According to the witch doctor, Frau Rundel had cast a spell over the farm. The gullible farmer believed the story and so did many of the villagers. They began shunning Frau Rundel, walking out of shops any time she entered. Rundel's two sisters also took sides against his wife and the farmer himself insisted she sleep in a hayloft, away from all other people.

After nine months of increasingly cruel treatment, Frau Rundel decided she had suffered enough and applied for a divorce. The case was riddled with witchcraft evidence,

despite the farmer's angry denials. The judge was presented with quotes and written statements. The farmer's sisters had written of Frau Rundel that "her eyes would change color at midnight and we would often see her talk to the devil in the middle of a blazing fire."

The divorce was granted but the trouble did not end there. The authorities stepped in and took a hand, incensed at the behavior of all concerned. After a police investigation, witch doctor Dreher was declared guilty of making false declarations in public and signing false statements. He, Rundel and Rundel's sisters were all sentenced. The farmer's ex-wife left the village, vowing never to return.

One of the greatest influences on this type of Germanic witchcraft is a pair of books which are nothing but elaborate hoaxes. The so-called "sixth and seventh books of Moses," ruled forgeries by every witchcraft expert, are much read by German witch doctors and believed in by their patients. An expert who has written a well-received book on the occult criminal blames the Moses books for much of the trouble. The author, Dr. Herbert Schaefer, holds a high position at the German Federal Criminal Police Headquarters.

Dr. Schaefer states that these forgeries which present nothing but false information and frightening superstition were, at last report, still on sale in many districts of Germany.

Johann Kruse has also lashed out against the two volumes.

"They are most dangerous because they are falsely ascribed to the prophet (Moses) and thereby impress simple minds," he says.

Simple minds seem to exist in the cities, too, for it is there that one can buy many peculiar medications in certain neighborhood drugstores. Items such as devil's dirt, elephant lice (available whole or ground), devil's tail and witch powder can be purchased along with tooth-

paste, patent medicines and hair tonics. There are no hard and fast rules as to which pharmacy stocks what. But the information spreads quickly by that most reliable method of human communication—word-of-mouth.

In Hamburg, chances are that some pharmacies near the Reeperbahn (the section of the city dedicated to girls, glitter and go-go-go amusements) will sell various love potions along with more ordinary wares. Devil's dirt can also be found at similar stores; if sales are brisk, it is obvious the customers do not have chemical analysis kits at home, for they would find that the "potent drug" is, at best, nothing but ordinary field dirt. At worst, it may contain animal feces, dried and ground.

The love potions, which are tinted by food coloring and chemical dyes, frequently contain a high percentage of alcohol. Where success has been claimed for these potions, it is possible that the alcohol—or perhaps the ardor of the love-smitten buyer of the potion—deserves the credit.

At the other end of the scale, hex drinks said to induce abortion can be found, although not always for sale over the counter. The prices for such mixtures tend to be higher and the prospective buyer often has to seek out a witch or a witch doctor directly. Some of these mixtures are strong enough to cause serious illness and, as a possible result, miscarriage. Others are harmless mixtures of vile-tasting liquids. The seller does not have too much to fear since the buyer is not in a position to resort to the law for compensation in the event the abortion potion does not do its work effectively.

Overall, in both town and countryside, witchcraft now has a stronger-than-ever grip on Germany. And the pattern today is one of violence, brutality and threat, even as it has been through the centuries. The practitioners of witchcraft create much suffering, yet they often are made to suffer in return as a result of their practices. Witchcraft in Germany today remains a thing of darkness and bestiality—and despite the enlightened efforts of the erudite

experts, there is as yet little or no change in the pattern of perversion.

It seems fitting that it was Germany who gave the world that well-known word for fear and anxiety: *Angst*.

CHAPTER VI

Magic à la Mode—Witchcraft the French Way

IN TRULY Gallic manner, love plays a major part in French witchcraft. Love for love—and love for money, and then there are occasions when the two are intertwined. Gone are the days of greater glory and Joan of Arc, who was, after all, officially burned as a witch. The lust and political expediency displayed by the witch-hunters of the Middle Ages are highlighted at every turn in the story of Joan of Arc.

Nowadays, such large canvases as the one traversed by the battling girl from Domremy are gone from the game. Contemporary French witchcraft is more intimate, more personal. And it has been so for quite some time.

In the seventeenth century, when Louis XIV was King of France, there lived a witch-cum-fortune-teller who went by the name of Madame La Voisin. Voisin means neighbor; her "good neighbor" policies were definitely selective. She was extremely popular with women, for she specialized in telling them when they would become widows, and that was a matter of great interest in those days of arranged marriages. What is more, Madame La Voisin was also adept at telling who would inherit the fortunes thus available.

But she went a bit further than merely "seeing" the future. Madame La Voisin would help her predictions come true by providing her customers with adequate doses of poison to assist the future—as she saw it—in going its required way. Exactly how many clients she had is impos-

sible to establish but her magic powders helped more than two thousand people depart this world.

Shortly before World War I, another sorceress achieved great popularity in Paris. She claimed to be a direct descendant of the Druids of ancient Gaul and, in addition to fortune-telling, she specialized in charms. Mistletoe, selected and tied up by the "Druidess" would insure good health. So-called Druid stones were claimed to bring riches to those already wealthy enough to purchase them. Love was reportedly bound by a gold chain and pieces of it could be obtained—suitably spell-infused. If one were afraid of one's enemies, a phial of "accursed water" supposedly provided protection, of a sort. Unlike Madame La Voisin's concoctions, however, the accursed water was not poisonous. It seems to have brought comfort to its possessor rather than harm to those he feared or disliked.

There are still thousands of fortune-tellers, seers and occultists active in Paris today. Many of them advertise their powers quite freely; others merely hint at what they can do in the newspaper advertisements one sees day after day in Parisian papers. Behind many of these fortune-telling claims also lie claims to witchcraft, and a great many of the classic potions and philters can be obtained in Paris' famous Pigalle district.

It has been noted that fortune-tellers tend to cluster in the areas where prostitutes are found in large numbers—Pigalle, for example. Patrice Boussel, the author of *Le Guide des Voyantes,* and an expert on Parisian fortune-tellers, says this is no coincidence. He points out the two trades have a strong bond in common; they appeal to and attract the misfits, the misunderstood, the lonely.

"Everyone likes to be taken seriously, to be a center of interest, even at a price," Monsieur Boussel notes. "Prostitutes and fortune-tellers boost the ego."

Also to be considered is the fact that many of the girls who work in and around areas such as Pigalle are originally from small towns and villages in the provinces of France. The practice of witchcraft and allied endeavors would be neither new nor peculiar to them, for it almost

certainly played its part in their young lives in simpler and less sophisticated terms.

In small villages, the local midwife is also the local witch, as often as not. *La sorcière* is usually well-respected if not necessarily well-loved. She deals with matters of health and l'amour, is adept at growing herbs and medicinal plants and is given to brewing *tisanes,* or strange-tasting infusions, many of which are recognized to have beneficial value. She also knows when to plant seeds so they will grow the best, when to let a broody hen sit on her eggs, when to discourage her mothering instincts and how to snap a sulky cow out of withholding milk.

La sorcière is veterinarian, mother confessor, doctor, nurse, chemist and lonely hearts' counselor all wrapped into one. Knowledge, psychological insight, common sense and straight malarkey combine to make her what she is. Sometimes the malarkey quotient in her makeup rises to disproportionate levels, however, and that plus a touch of avarice can lead a witch into trouble.

Such was the case of Marie Louise Asselin, who was charged with fraud and illegal practice of medicine. The sixty-three-year-old woman had been doing a brisk trade in Mondeville, the small village in northern France that was her home. Her two-dollar fee was exorbitant both for the area and for the dubious value of the consultation she granted. A disgruntled patient finally caused her downfall. Marie Louise had sold an "infallible" lumbago cure which failed to live up to expectations. Aching backs tend to inflame short tempers, and the old woman's angry patient complained to the police.

The police inspector sent to investigate the case found one thing immediately apparent: whether or not her magic was effective, Marie Louise Asselin genuinely believed in its power. So Inspector Eugene Fernaud resorted to a little magic himself.

"I convinced her I had even stronger magical powers," was Fernaud's report. "I chanted songs in native dialects of Madagascar, where I once served, and fixed her with a hypnotic stare."

From Madagascar to French Normandy is a long, long way but the basic tenets of witchcraft are worldwide and know no boundaries. La Asselin, recognizing a power superior to her own when she encountered one, gave herself up without further ado.

In many farmhouse kitchens, both in the north and south of France, one finds a strand of garlic hung somewhere near the door. It is true that, particularly in the south—say, in Provence—a great deal of garlic is used in cooking. But that one strand, often looped like a necklace, has nothing to do with the celebrated cuisine—garlic is one of the oldest anti-witch charms known in Europe. Anti-*evil*-witch, that is; for the good *sorcière* is cautiously welcomed. Her love potions and soothing *tisanes* are frequently needed and wanted, so it is considered best to stay on the right side of her.

Quite literally on the *right* side, in some cases, since regional superstition has it that the left side, the "sinister" side, is where evil is carried. The left side is therefore considered dangerous. But no matter from what side, it is advisable to be on good terms with *la sorcière*. However, just in case one should fall from favor, it is felt best to keep a strong amulet on hand—as a form of insurance, so to speak—something that will guard one from the ill effects of the more unpleasant spells. Garlic is the best known and best trusted of all such amulets. In some regions, whenever cases of bad or black withcraft are said to have occurred, people will go so far as to wear a necklace of garlic around their necks, or to hang a single garlic bulb by a string, like a pendant.

Garlic is also strong protection against vampires, and so well-known is the belief that French film genius Roger Vadim used it in his *Blood and Roses*. The plot, cleverly composed of incidents that can be explained by both psychological and supernatural theories, concerns the life and eventual death of the heroine/villainess who is mentally disturbed, diabolically possessed and shows definite signs of being a lesbian/vampire.

The story takes place at a country estate. As soon as the

rumors about a vampire begin circulating among the servants on the estate, the garlic wreaths come instantly to the fore. In one scene, a garlic garland is raised high in protection against the advancing vampire/lesbian who ultimately comes to an accidental/symbolic death via a wooden stake through her heart. Only wood or silver can kill a vampire—anyone in the south of France can tell you that.

Possibly, all over France there are numbers of women who could tell one a great deal more about witchcraft beliefs, practices and superstitions these days. For witchcraft has become endowed with a certain contemporary chic and an awareness of some branch of it is most *comme il faut*. No longer the whispered plaything of the sexually experimental avant-garde nor the totally sneered-at superstition of the peasant, witchcraft in much of France has become not only acceptable but a subject of great interest.

Reputable magazines have published articles on the subject. The beneficial aspects of some of *la sorcière's tisanes* have been generally acknowledged; it is smart, it is "in," it is "now" to know which herbal tea will help your complexion and which will calm your nerves. In true Gallic fashion, Frenchwomen have lightheartedly plucked items of real worth from the old witchcraft tradition and used them to embellish both themselves and their everyday lives. The demand for specialized teas and herbs is such that many apothecaries carry stocks as standard items, and the increase in sales has been steady for several years.

Newspapers, some of which carry fortune-tellers' advertisements, have also disseminated knowledge about witchcraft in France. Personal experiences in the field of witchcraft have been run in serial form, complete with photographs. Both *Ici Paris* and *France Dimanche*, newspapers with nationwide circulation, have published articles and interviews on witchcraft, devil worship and related fields time and again.

The confessions of Odette Guilioneau, a young woman

who claims she was "possessed" for ten years, ran for several issues. Mademoiselle Guilioneau, at one period of her life the owner of a small farm in the Sarthe region, about two hundred miles from Paris, first came into contact with witchcraft when she was eleven years old.

A weirdly garbed mob passed by the house in which the impressionable little girl lived; the loud chanting and grotesque gesticulations both frightened and fascinated her. The crowd was "speaking to the wandering spirits," Odette's parents told her and they locked the doors and shut the windows of their small home until the chanters were far away.

Some time later, Odette herself participated in a witchcraft rite. She went to the gathering with her grandmother. It was a small affair at which a neighbor wanted a hex put on a relative. This was done by obtaining a freshly laid egg, which the local witch wrapped in a piece of paper. Pronouncing incantations over the egg, she twisted the ends of the paper tighter and tighter, as though she were wringing a towel. Only *la sorcière's* voice could be heard in the close, dark room, until suddenly the egg broke with a sharp crack. This, according to the spell-maker, meant that the curse would be effective.

In later years, Odette came to realize why this particular spell turned out to be effective. The witch saw to it that the woman she had cursed heard about the curse. Being illiterate and highly superstitious, the victim believed in the efficacy of the curse and began to suffer from headaches and insomnia. She finally paid a large sum of money to have the curse removed.

At the time, however, Odette was too young and inexperienced to understand the finer points. She became deeply intrigued with the local spells and beliefs and finally she came into contact with a sorcerer named Francois Pineguel.

Odette firmly maintains he cast a spell over her.

"One day, he made me eat some red salt," she states in her memoirs. "Thus, I became his accomplice."

It is possible that the man had some knowledge of

hypnosis. Whatever the basis for his power over her, it took a prison term to break Odette's spell. According to Mademoiselle Guilioneau, it was the almoner of the prison who exorcised her. Since her return to an unbewitched state, she has kept well away from all forms of spell-laying or witchcraft.

Returning from the provinces and refocusing on Paris once more, one inevitably comes to the subject of the black mass. Not that the black mass is any part of legitimate witchcraft. All experts, students and believers in witchcraft look upon it as something of a third-rate circus act. The gulf between witchcraft and the black mass is enormous. First of all, witchcraft is a power. The black mass is a ceremony, an act of worshipping the devil—or Beelzebub, as he is usually called by devil-worshippers.

Second, witchcraft is original in its forms and crafts; whether or not one believes in it, it stands on its own as an entity. Quite the contrary is true of the black mass, which is nothing but a parody of the Catholic Mass and therefore can make no claim to originality.

Third, no power or effect is supposed to result from the satanists' celebration. If it culminates in a sexual orgy—and not all black masses do—that is an occurrence apart.

Then again, witchcraft is far older than both satanism and its mass. Witchcraft has been around since man began; the black mass was not celebrated until the thirteenth century. For sociological, political and religious reasons, it gained a large following in medieval France, reaching the apex of its popularity during the late 1600's. A great devotee was Madame de Montespan, notorious mistress of Louis XIV. She was also an innovator and one of her favorite gambits for the midnight devil-worship ceremony was to offer herself as the altar. Literally. The Royal Mistress would stretch out nude on a black-covered altar and the black mass would be performed with the satanic priest officiating over her naked body.

An alternate form of altar is a coffin. Most black mass

artifacts are black: the chamber in which the ceremony is held is supposed to be draped with black curtains, black candles are used; the officiator wears black robes, sometimes only a cape, with red cabalistic designs. Instead of incense, hashish is burned during the ceremony. Sometimes Indian hemp is used instead. There are several variations in both decor and rituals but the parodic chanting always remains the same.

Menstrual blood and dried feces are the "sacraments" of the satanists' rite, and, depending on the celebrant group, are either swallowed or smeared on the face. When an orgy is to follow the black mass, sexual stimulants of diverse kinds are added to the blood. Further drug-taking is encouraged at the close of the blasphemous ritual.

Such ceremonies are still observed in Paris from time to time. One was recently reported as having taken place in a seldom-used large hall in an Ile de France mansion. Another recent rite was reported in detail in a French newspaper; a staff writer on the paper had managed to get himself invited to the mass.

His account of the midnight occurrence showed it to be in the classic pattern of the satanists. But one interesting point emerged. "They (the participants) were all elderly," he noted, "and for the most part, sexually degenerate. Before I attended the Black Mass, I knew that all the people going to it were from a certain very wealthy sector of society. But not until they were all assembled in front of me did I realize that only the older ones indulged in satanism."

The reporter followed up his story on the ceremony with a series of interviews with the younger members of precisely the same socio-economic group. The youngsters dismissed the satanist rituals practiced by their elders with unanimous disdain.

But although these sophisticated young people were quick to laugh off the black mass as old hat, their attitude was very different when they were questioned about witchcraft:

"I've heard some interesting things."

"I have a friend who is a witch . . . she has such *force* . . . I envy her."

"Witchcraft gives one a power which transforms one's whole life."

It is the appeal of self-discovery allied to a mystical power that has so captured the present-day youth of France and, in many instances, encouraged them to delve into witchcraft. For, if they believe it to be a power, it immediately becomes a challenge. They want to know whether they, too, potentially possess this power. And if so, what use they can make of it.

CHAPTER VII

Sorcery—Italian Style

THERE IS NOTHING secret and very little that is hidden about contemporary witchcraft in Italy. As might be expected, one finds most traces of the power and its practitioners in the southern regions of the country, both in the "toe of the boot," Calabria, and of course, in Sicily. This does not mean there is no witchcraft elsewhere in Italy, for such is far from the case.

Tradition, one of the strongest factors ruling Italian family life, particularly in the south, is also predominant in Italian witchcraft. There are no opposing theories as to whether a witch is born or made. The laws of tradition laid down the rules generations ago and no one questions them. One must be born a witch; there is no alternative.

Several different signs at birth are considered to mark the newborn infant as a witch. Some signs are believed to be more significant than others. A combination of two or more signs portends strong magical powers indeed. A premature seven-month child will have minor powers; should it be born on the seventh day of the seventh month of its mother's pregnancy, more potency is ascribed to its witchcraft gifts. Far stronger is the power of a girl who is born seventh in a family with six other daughters. Lesser again is the gift of a child born in a caul.

Just as in other parts of the world, the child with the most powerful witchcraft abilities is the one who is born on Christmas Eve, with midnight the peak time. Any time between nightfall December 24th and daybreak December 25th would be auspicious but the midnight baby would always take power precedence.

Because of tradition, female witches far outnumber the few male sorcerers in Italy. And today tradition is abetted by local economic conditions, since many young men leave the south of Italy for the greater working opportunities of the north. Some even move to other countries in Europe, returning to their families only during the holiday season. The matriarchal aspects of Italian family life also help explain the preponderance of female witches.

In any event, the child born as an accepted witch is believed to come into her full powers when she reaches the age of twenty. At that time, she may be "apprenticed" to an older, already established, sorceress whose duty it is to initiate her into the lore and practice of witchcraft. The novice may or may not choose to follow the calling; usually, it is the old women who are strongest in the cult.

One of the few male sorcerers to achieve a large measure of fame and success is *Il Mago di Napoli*—the Witch of Naples. A professional diplomat and a man of title, *Il Mago* is much in demand and his cures are highly esteemed by Neapolitan society. Students at the University of Naples also consult him regularly for predictions of upcoming examination results. The success of *Il Mago di Napoli* would indicate that witchcraft flourishes, and is practiced, at all levels of Italian society and is not solely restricted to the ill-educated peasantry.

Southern Italy is basically poor and undeveloped; life in this region revolves around the farm and village. Nearly every hamlet has its accepted *strega,* or witch. By and large, she does not specialize in either black or white magic. Magic is magic, the Italian *streghe* maintain, and the difference between the two is merely one of application. This follows the old adage of one man's meat being another's poison—one man's good-luck spell often being another man's disaster.

Prices are highly variable from witch to witch and from village to village. Money, particularly in the extremely poor areas, is not necessarily the medium of payment. A dozen eggs can buy a love philter in some places. For

more complicated spells a price as high as a cow may be asked. Sometimes a double price is fixed: six eggs down, another six when the spell has proven successful. If nothing else, this method of double-payment evinces good faith on the part of the witch and an encouraging confidence in her own powers.

The well-known Italian writer, Carlo Levi, describes in his book, *Christ Stopped at Eboli,* his Fascist-imposed exile in the south of Italy and the poverty-stricken, sun-drenched village in which he was forced to live. On arrival at the village, Dr. Levi had to find himself a housekeeper; local mores allowed that only a witch could serve as housekeeper for a bachelor. Which was how Dr. Levi made the acquaintance of Giulia, who was then forty-one years old but looked older and who "was a mistress of the art of making philters, and young girls came to her for advice on how to prepare their love potions. . . .

"She knew herbs and the power of talismans; she could cure illness with the repetition of spells and she could even bring about the death of anyone she chose by uttering terrible incantations."

Giulia was not the only witch in the village—it was reckoned that there were about twenty of them all told. All female. From these witches, Dr. Levi learned a great number of charms and spells and incantations which he records in his book. Many of the charms were reputed to cure various sicknesses. Carlo Levi notes their existence and use with the wry interest one might expect from a qualified medical man. Among the objects considered to possess general curative properties were the bones of toads, old coins and wolves' teeth.

Dr. Levi goes on to tell us, "There were spells for mending broken bones, for curing toothaches, stomach aches and headaches, for transferring one's ills to some other person, animal, plant or object, for throwing off the influence of the evil eye or of bewitchment."

The significance of Christmas in witchcraft ritual is emphasized by the fact that the witch Giulia refused to speak to Carlo Levi of "death magic" except on Christmas

Day. She claimed, "Such things can be told only on Christmas Day . . . on any other day of the year it is a mortal sin." Although Giulia was apparently persuaded to pass on the details of her death magic on December 25th, 1935, Dr. Levi informs his readers that he was at that time bound by an oath of secrecy and must therefore keep silent about what he learned. Whether the doctor's silence springs from discretion or skepticism, the reader is left to decide for himself.

But it is incontrovertible fact that in every village and hamlet in the south, the *streghe* not only exist, they play a leading role in the life of the village. And as they get older and better-established, the *streghe* tend to acquire identifying titles. The Giulia mentioned above was known as *Giulia di Sant' Arcangelo,* simply because she had been born in the village of Sant' Arcangelo, though she practiced as a witch in the village of Gagliano.

More typically, however, the titles acquired by witches identify them by a physical or mental characteristic. Thus, one hears of *Carminella La Lupa* (Carminella the She-Wolf), *Sabella La Ricciotta* (Sabella the Curly-Haired One), *Zelinda La Buona* (Zelinda the Good), *Concetta La Praticona* (Concetta the Experienced) and—ominously—*Zaira La Boia* (Zaira the Exeuctioner).

Although they do not specialize in either black or white magic, some of the Italian *streghe* do get known for particular aspects of witchcraft. One may be famous for her love philters, another for her cure for pustulant boils. Regrettably, there are also those whose fame rests on their ability to eliminate an enemy—poisonous mushrooms rather than straight hexing have been found to be their main ally.

In recent years, an Italian journalist who went to Abruzzo managed to get hold of a magic philter brewed by a witch called Melinda. Her name alone is enough to create respect and awe among the local people. The journalist was warned that the phial he was given contained a malefic potion. Melinda had cast a strong spell on it, for it

had originally been brewed for someone who wanted to put a hex on an enemy.

Always interested in tracking down the full story, the journalist took the phial with him and gave it to a laboratory for chemical analysis. The ingredients turned out to be interesting—and certainly would have been fatal if taken internally. One chemist was quoted as saying that the list of ingredients looked like "a catalogue of poisonous mushrooms."

No legal action of any kind was taken against Melinda, since no crime had actually been committed. No one had been killed—because no one had drunk the liquid. The potion had not been prepared specifically for the journalist and any local authority would flatly have refused to prosecute on an "intent to kill" basis. From past experience, the authorities would recognize the impracticality of it—the impossibility of finding out who had ordered the spell cast and the potion prepared, discovering the identity of the intended victim, the original cause of the enmity and so forth.

The local population knows one thing: authorities come and authorities go, but witches and their powers are always around. To inform on one who has visited a witch or who has wanted a spell cast—no, it is not worth it. No one wants to bring the horror of a witch's revenge upon himself, because this will almost surely entail the dreaded *mal'occhio*—the evil eye.

The intricacies of the evil eye and the beliefs connected with it will be fully discussed in a later chapter. Here, the most important thing to realize about it is its absolute power, the total grip its concept has on vast segments of the population of Italy. Even those who pooh-pooh witchcraft, those who would never in their lives consider going to a *strega,* those who live in any of the big, bustling, modern Italian cities—even they will pause for thought and consideration when the subject of *il mal'occhio* arises.

Charms are worn to shield the wearer from the power of the *mal'occhio*. In some rural regions, effigies similar to

scarecrows may be placed outside a house to protect it from anyone casting a *mal'occhio* on those who live inside. Or, for that matter, on the house itself, since the *mal'occhio* could cause the roof to leak, or a wall to crumble, or some other structural failure.

Because of all this, authorities are seldom called to assist in cases of witchcraft. The cult flourishes unchecked.

A curious yet interesting witch's recipe comes from the art of Sabella *La Ricciotta.* It is a cure for most forms of the common cold and involves the chopping up of garlic cloves which are then wrapped in a small bundle. The patient is put to bed under warm covers with the garlic bundle placed as close as possible to his nose, insuring the constant breathing in of the strong fumes. Sounds ridiculous—and maybe it *is* ridiculous. Or it would be—if it weren't for the fact that, more often than not, the remedy works.

Smelly it may be, but it is also frequently effective, whether garlic cloves alone are used or a mixture of chopped garlic and diced onion. It is interesting to note in this connection that the common onion is probably among the oldest known aids to help cure the common cold in Europe. A syrup made by boiling onions and sugar together has been used as a cough-and-cold syrup for generations. Various receipts for it can still be found in turn-of-the-century household books, with note of it found in earlier publications also.

Furthermore, in homeopathy, a knowledge accepted in many nations as a branch of medical science, there is a substance called *alium cepa* that is used in the curing of colds. *Alium cepa* is derived from onions.

"Witchcraft is the crossroads where medical science, psychology and religion meet," is a popular definition of the cult in some circles. There is no doubt that this mental aspect applies in one way and another to the tactics used by *streghe* who are known for their successes in curing sickness. Filomena *La Capara* is among this group; another is the aforementioned Concetta *La Praticona.* Concetta has even done what might be termed a certain amount of

medical research. She has, in recent years, updated her cure for pustulant boils.

The thick paste she had used had been effective, but drastic, containing as it did a certain amount of caustic soda. Nowadays her cures for boils are still effective but milder in aftereffect. It is rumored that Concetta took a trip to a nearby city and spent long hours in consultation with a neighborhood pharmacist. But Concetta, true to her witch's standards, is not giving away any trade secrets.

Carminella *La Lucca* (Carminella the Foolish One), also known as *La Maga d'Amore* (The Magician of Love), was another witch anxious to keep her recipes to herself. Long a specialist in love potions, she had—by her standards—perfected many different kinds to fit all possible circumstances.

Certainly her title as the Magician of Love bespeaks her success and popularity among the lovelorn, whose problems Carminella must have solved with some modicum of skill. Once again, the light fingers of a curious reporter helped explain part of that success. A stolen phial containing one of *La Lucca's* most potent philters, used only on exceptionally difficult cases, was taken to a laboratory for chemical analysis. It was found to contain the boiled-down extract of a poisonous plant; the poison was of a kind which attacks the human nervous system. Depending on the dosage administered, the effects of the drug might be of only short duration. But in Italy, where passion flares fast and honor must be upheld, even a short period of drug-induced excess on anyone's part would cause local tradition and family honor to intervene, thus permanently harnessing the love victim, presumably to the satisfaction of the purchaser of the philter.

Once again, it is a case of foreseeable circumstances converging to help bring about the witch's success—a set of factors that practice and time alone will teach her to use to best advantage.

As in many other parts of the world, in Italy, the witches are also fortune-tellers. Predictions have always enjoyed great popularity. *L'Almanaca del Barba Nera*

(Black Beard's Almanac), probably the best-known prophetic almanac ever produced in Italy, is still famed today and referred to in secret.

Of those witches who decline to mix potions and remain strictly prophetesses, the ones in the south are known as *saggias*—sages, or wise women. Some of their wisdom is simple psychological insight, as it can be with a crystal-ball gazer at a Midwestern county fair. Their readings, however, can be performed in any of several different ways.

One local method is a favorite before sowing time. Egg whites are mixed—but not beaten—with water. The mixture is poured into a clear glass pitcher. Then a fork is slipped into the thick liquid, tines up. Its movements and eventual placing are then read by the *saggia,* who interprets them as crop forecasts and advice about planting time. Unrealistic as this may seem, a related witch's tale has turned out to have a scientific basis. It was witches like the *saggias* who always used to advise farmers to plant seeds "with the growing moon." The moon's magic, according to the *saggias,* helped pull the growing seedlings up from the ground, making them grow faster than those planted when the moon was in its waning phase.

In recent years, this magic fancy has been established as fast. The influence of the moon on the waters of the earth is, of course, a long-observed fact; its effects on seedlings is now known to be comparable. So, if egg whites and water can be affected by, say, barometric pressure, it may yet be found that there is some scientific basis for the present-day crop forecasts of the *saggias.*

In Sicily, a strange mixture of Church liturgy and witchcraft incantation goes into many of the ceremonies led by the *streghe.* One of these, which is held specifically to keep malevolent spirits at bay, invokes St. George and calls upon him for protection. The invocation asks that:

". . . as you saved the King's daughter from the dragon
So keep away from me the malevolence of the wicked . . ."

The words are recited in a darkened room in front of a

human skull. Only candlelight is permitted; the skull usually rests on a black-draped table. Unlike the black mass of the satanist cults, there is no parody or desecration intended; it is merely the manifestation of the mingling of supernatural beliefs.

Also called upon frequently are St. Vitus and St. Lucia, the latter most often as a protectoress against eye ailments and the ever-feared *mal'occhio*. St. Vitus, whose celebrated tic is commemorated in his native Luxembourg every year with a processional dance, becomes a bastion against dog bites, when invoked in Sicily.

A black-draped table with a skull on top of it is again a prerequisite when it comes to any of the *pupazzo* rites. A *pupazzo* is a small doll or an effigy in crude approximation of a human figure. Frequently, however, the *pupazzi* are carefully made; scraps of fabric are fashioned into clothes for some of them. If a piece of cloth can be stolen from the person the *pupazzo* is to represent, the spell is believed to be especially potent.

In essence, the *pupazzo* ceremony is akin to the well-known voodoo rite which involves the sticking of pins into a doll symbolizing the victim of the curse. The words may be different but the intent is the same: the transmutation from symbolic harm to physical harm, from doll-effigy to a chosen human. As has been pointed out by most doctors and government authorities in Sicily, the effect of the *pupazzo* rite is directly proportional to the amount of directed gossip about it that reaches the chosen victim. Nonetheless, it is often very effective. *Basta crederci* is the Italian explanation; it is enough to believe.

And generation upon generation of Italians in towns and villages have believed in *mal'occhio,* in the power of the local *strega* or *mago,* and in the predictions of *l'Almanaca del Barba Nera.*

CHAPTER VIII

Witchcraft Across the Continent

IT IS ALWAYS shocking to find the fantastic among the prosaic, the unusual among the expected, and the last execution in Europe for the crime of witchcraft fits precisely into these categories. Glancing at the general aspects of witchcraft on the Continent, one might well expect an event of this kind to have occurred in Germany, or France, or England. Witchcraft was rife in all these countries two hundred years ago when the execution took place.

But no. The execution took place in Switzerland, that peaceful and placid haven of restless Europe.

Nor was this execution the last sign of witchcraft in bourgeois Switzerland. In 1959, a murder trial there had its origins in witchcraft. A man was tried and convicted for the fatal beating of a woman. His defense was that she had cast a spell on him. In his opinion she was a witch, and presumably represented a danger from which he had to protect himself.

That the court did not see it his way says something for the progress of the last two hundred years, but the killing itself highlighted vast areas of belief and superstition that still flourish today.

Another neat and tidy country where one would not expect to encounter witchcraft is low-lying, canal-laced Holland. And yet the Netherlands abound with stories and beliefs of the supernatural, or supranatural, as some call it. For a small country, Holland has had disproportionate fame for its seers or clairvoyants.

Some of these Dutch citizens have been straightforward

seers. Others have been classified as part-seers, part-healers (whether faith-healers or herbal-concoction healers). Many have also been astrologers; horoscope casting is a profitable business anywhere in Europe today.

When Queen Juliana of the Netherlands gave birth to her fourth daughter and the little Princess was found to be suffering from a severe sight defect, the distraught Queen turned to a woman faith-healer for help. For a time, this so-called healer held great sway in royal circles. But the failure of this woman to effect any improvement in the eyesight of the Princess by her magic methods, plus increasing pressure from all sides for the Queen to cease her unconventional pursuits, eventually resulted in the abandonment of the seer/healer and her mystic remedies.

Whatever their social connections, however, Dutch seers are very much in evidence. And not always on their own home ground, either.

One of the most recent instances where a Dutch seer/clairvoyant was asked to use his supranatural talents in a foreign country was the lengthy and involved case of the notorious Boston Strangler. Since many details of the case are still firmly under official wraps, it is impossible to say at this time exactly how much the findings of the clairvoyant Peter Hurkos contributed toward the discovery of the killer's identity. But the mere fact that Hurkos was called in by the American authorities demonstrates the fame of his extraordinary ability.

A 1965 murder in England was also partially cleared up by the efforts of a Dutch clairvoyant. The murder itself was mysterious; it was believed that a man had been shot—but no body could be found.

After several months had gone by, it was the seer who told the wife of the missing man that her husband's body would be found at a certain point along the Thames River. Within a few days, a partially buried corpse was discovered not far from the cited spot.

Another seer in Holland who arouses both admiration and controversy is Gerard Croiset. Now in his fifties, Mynheer Croiset lives in Utrecht. He has been termed one

of the Netherlands' leading paragnosts—that is, a person who possesses the gift of seeing not only the non-visible present (the present removed from his particular surroundings) but also the past and the future.

Gerard Croiset is at a loss to explain his unusual abilities. He does not boast of or vaunt his strange powers but his calm inner conviction of them enables him to remain unaffected by the doubts voiced by his detractors.

"I don't really care whether people believe I have this clairvoyant power or not," he says quietly. He knows he has it. And many people—including hard-to-convince policemen—feel they can believe in him because he has shown such consistent proof of his powers.

Croiset becomes more emphatic when asked what fees he charges when he applies his power to aid somebody with a problem.

"I do not use my power for commercial gain," is his firm answer. One of the reasons for it is interesting; Gerard Croiset feels he might damage his clairvoyance by accepting fees.

"I might lose it (the power) if I did . . . I charge nothing for my services."

His ability has been called "an astonishing power" by more than one policeman in Holland. In recent years, the cases Gerard Croiset has helped solve include the disappearance of a small boy, a case often cited by those who believe in his mystic ability as a paragnost. But skeptics still exist.

"He is a very shrewd man, and honest," is the opinion of C.I.D. Inspector Filippus Brink. Inspector Brink is not only fully qualified in policework, he is also a lawyer. "I attribute his success to clever guesswork. He has never done anything to persuade me otherwise."

But Police Inspector David von Woudenberg of Voorburg, The Hague, feels differently about Gerard Croiset.

"The man is incredible," says von Woudenberg, going on to assert he would not hesitate to call on Croiset if he ever needed the services of a seer. The case of the missing

child is among the factors that have convinced von Woudenberg of the authenticity of Croiset's ability.

The child, a six-year-old boy, was reported missing by his parents. Police searched the boy's neighborhood with methodical thoroughness. Buildings in the area, the woods and the surrounding fields were all meticulously probed. Canals were dragged; people were questioned. But no trace of the missing child was anywhere to be found.

This went on for a week, at which point the boy's parents contacted Gerard Croiset and brought him into the case. The seer sketched the section of the canal where he said the boy had fallen in. The drawing was a detailed one; Croiset then said the child's body would not be found there but further along the canal.

Inspector von Woudenberg and Gerard Croiset drove out to the section of the canal in question. Everything was as Croiset had described it. They then drove on until they reached a small bridge spanning the canal.

David von Woudenberg says: "Croiset stopped me in the middle, and I could see the perspiration breaking out on his forehead. He was red in the face and was obviously undergoing tremendous emotional strain."

(It is a well-known fact among clairvoyants that the working of their powers is such a strain that they are left emotionally gutted and often physically exhausted after having concentrated and applied these powers.)

Then Croiset told the police inspector that the child's body would surface by that particular bridge on the following Tuesday.

"He told me it would be pointless dragging for it (the body)," continues the inspector. "Despite that, we dragged the whole stretch of that canal again that weekend. But we found nothing."

Then came the fateful Tuesday that clairvoyant Croiset had earmarked as the day the child's body would appear.

"At 7:45 on Tuesday morning, one of our policemen saw the body come to the surface . . . it was uncanny," concludes von Woudenberg.

It was also enough to convince the police inspector of Croiset's special abilities.

"How else but through some strange power could this man predict things as accurately as that?" asks David von Woudenberg. His attitude is echoed by the many who feel Croiset is a genuine seer.

Seers, but with more of an astrological inclination, are also highly regarded in the other two countries that, together with the Netherlands, form Benelux. Astrological projections and other forms of fortune-telling are profitable and popular in both Belgium and Luxembourg. Lucky charms are much in evidence, although not as blatantly paraded as they are in some sections of neighboring Germany. Medicinal witchcraft tends to be of the milder, beneficial variety. The main exceptions are the purging, toxic mixtures brewed up for the brisk trade in abortion.

In Belgium, and to a lesser extent in Luxembourg, the influence of the many Italians who come north seeking work in the mines and steel mills has been felt. Many of the Italians have brought their own beliefs and superstitions along with them and, in a number of cases, even their herbal teas and magic mixtures.

This is not quite a case of the Italian *streghe* coming up to Benelux for a cozy session of recipe-swapping with the local *hexen*. The Italian men tend to leave their womenfolk at home, going back to join them for specific holidays during the year. And, in any event, even if a man did decide to bring his wife and children north with him, it is doubtful that he would also bring his mother or his aged grandmother. Since the practicing *streghe* are most frequently found among the older *mammas* and *nonnas*, it is easy to see that most of them stay behind in Italy.

But a young wife with apprentice knowledge of the craft may well accompany her husband to, say, a mining section of Belgium. To her, the country is strange, the language is foreign, the customs unknown. If her child gets sick, she is far more likely to resort to her local methods of curing than go to the nearest Belgian doctor. Should her own supplies, carried all the way from Italy,

eventually run out, she is again far more likely to ask her way to the nearest Belgian equivalent of her own village's dispensing witch.

Rosario Vizzini, on the other hand, did not feel he could trust any of the Belgian forms of healing at all. Vizzini, a Sicilian, was convinced his four-year-old daughter lay ill because of the *mal'occhio*. Someone, the forty-four-year-old father felt sure, had cast the evil eye on his child, so he did all he could to ward off its power.

Since he was living in Ougree, near the large Belgian city of Liege, Vizzini relied on his own set of magical instruments and books. But neighbors noted his lack of success in curing his daughter, eventually reporting the situation to the police. The child was rushed to hospital where she died. Vizzini was then arrested. When the police searched his home, they seized a varied collection of books, artifacts and metal instruments, all connected with the practice of witchcraft. Among them were a set of magic needles for puncturing holes to let out evil spirits from the body, seven Italian recipe books with nothing but witches' potions and a long-handled trident covered with cabalistic signs.

There is another factor which has contributed for many years to the limited but constant interchange of witchcraft lore and knowledge throughout Europe. Many of the gypsy tribes are still largely nomadic, though often within the borders of one country. But a few gypsies are sure to get across to caravans of the next country, and with them goes their knowledge of witchcraft, to be exchanged with any newcomers they may meet.

It is true, of course, that the Romanies keep pretty much to themselves, whether by choice or by ostracism from the country villages near which they set up their encampments. Nonetheless, they do make some contact with people wherever they go; fortune-telling has long been a gypsy specialty. It would seem that professional interest alone—if not straight female curiosity—would almost compel most local witchcraft practitioners, be they *sorcières* or *streghe* or village *hexen,* to go and take a look at what the competition is doing.

In some instances, the gypsy caravans have also been the source of specialized supplies—herbs and roots grown in an area the gypsies have recently traveled through, pebbles brought from a distant land, an unguent obtained from a pharmacist in a distant city. A bond between supplier and receiver can often grow into a business relationship that includes the exchanging of pertinent information—potion recipes and other sorcery lore. The legends and supernatural beliefs have never needed herb-wise old crones or specialists to disseminate their stories. The caravan story-tellers—even the children themselves—have always helped to do that.

Although the history of the gypsy peoples is a complicated one, theirs has been primarily an East to West movement, from Asia Minor to the countries of western Europe. It is therefore known that they have been one of the main influences in the spreading of the vampire legends. Interestingly enough, the word "vampire" itself has made this journey. Its etymological origins lie in the Turkish word *uber,* and *uber* means witch.

So from Turkey to Hungary, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, and from there to Austria, Italy and France, and from France across the Pyrenees to Spain, the witch/vampire legends traveled with the gypsies, getting, no doubt, somewhat more elaborate with every journey. Not that the tales needed much elaboration; Middle European vampire stories are quite terrifying enough. According to the generally accepted basic superstition, a corpse improperly buried (usually in unhallowed ground) changes into a large and ferocious bat, flying out of its grave by night to suck blood from sleeping humans.

This is taken to be the vampire's attempt to return to human form. By filling itself with human blood, it can regain its original body. But, before it can achieve this aim, the first rays of sun start to light up the sky and the supernatural creature of night and darkness must return to the blackness of its tomb.

As it happens, there really *are* vampire bats in existence—blood-sucking animals with no preternatural powers at all. The only trouble is, they do not fly through the European night. They are animals native to Central and South America, and we will meet them in another chapter.

But the night-flying propensities of European bats (a feature common to all bats), their odd physical construction and, in some cases, their large size and carnivorous eating habits automatically linked them in people's minds to darkness, evil and black magic.

Few facts were needed. As is so often the case in witchcraft, with a seemingly sinister basis to work on, human imagination is amply capable of supplying the rest.

CHAPTER IX

Occultism in the Orient

AS FAR AS witchcraft is concerned, the Mysterious East in all its alien and puzzling ways starts not in the environs of the Indian Ocean but on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There is a vast gulf between the culture of Europe and that of the countries along the north of Africa. The differences are far deeper than the mere contrast of climate and terrain.

The history and evolution of witchcraft in Europe is inextricably intertwined with the history and evolution of the Christian churches. In Moslem North Africa, the Mohammedan influence is predominant, and this alone would be sufficient to change things radically. But long before either of these two religions took root the vast gulf was already in existence.

The European tribes were still in a primitive and disorganized state when the first of the huge pyramids rose out of the African sands. To be capable of building such vast structures meant having far more at one's disposal than the mere availability of a large labor force, slave or otherwise. It also meant being in possession of a vast technical knowledge.

Mathematics and astrology—the latter for many centuries considered one of the sciences—both originated in the East. Both were combined in the building of the pyramids; the Great Pyramid is believed by many to be an accurate prophecy of the fate of the world. Those who specialize in that branch of occult knowledge claim they can trace the history of mankind by interpreting the high halls and low passages of the Great Pyramid as the wars,

discoveries and major events that have shaped the destiny of the world until the present era. But, of course, as in all such matters, a certain amount of argument and dissension exists among the interpreters of the prophetic signs.

On many of the ancient tombs, sections of the hieroglyphic texts on the walls were specifically inscribed to ward off evil spirits that might come near the tomb. Since the person who had died was considered to have embarked on a long journey, he still had need of the protection used during earth-life against such wandering spirits. From such sources can be derived the general pattern of supernatural beliefs during the times of the pharaohs, and once again worldwide parallels emerge, even across the time gap of thousands of years.

Osiris, one of the most powerful of the ancient Egyptian gods, was killed by darkness. He was the brother of the beautiful goddess Isis, and also her husband. The real-life, earth-ruling pharaohs also tended to marry their own sisters, making for somewhat inbred blood lines. But the point that interests us here is that Osiris was killed by *darkness.*

Darkness, night, the dark, blackness, the dark void, emptiness, the unseen and unknown . . . The words appear, in different combinations, in the ancient fears of people all over the world. Psychiatrists can, no doubt, make much of this, for fear of the dark crops up almost everywhere today just as it did in the days of ancient Egypt. So witchcraft is labeled a *dark* craft (hence the black magic term). But it is so labeled by the witch-*hunters,* or, as in the case of the present-day Orient, those who fear witches. For those within the craft itself, fear of darkness is merely an exploitable item.

Witchcraft in the East has long passed the forms in which it is now so prevalent in much of Western Europe. The Eastern civilizations, so vastly different from and so much older than those in the West, have long since accepted the supernatural in their own intricate ways. The power of what we term the occult is no longer questioned.

Rather, it has been absorbed into different terms—terms which to a Westerner may seem mystical or religious.

Eastern interest and practice now lie mainly in controlling the power, and that is where the mystical frequently enters the picture. Where the West demands scientific proof, the East calls for introspection and mental control.

As an example, consider the phenomenon referred to as suspended animation. This is the reduction of all activities of the body, such as is seen in hibernating animals. In the West, vast scientific resources have been involved in the chemical study of suspended animation; full knowledge of it would be of immense value in many medical fields, including the forward-looking studies of projected space travel.

In the East, particularly in India, fakirs have also been studying it for years—but in their own way. There are those who can, by mind-over-body control alone, literally lower their pulse rates and generally slow down all functions of the body until they enter a trance-like state of almost perfectly suspended animation. Some may term this magic; others may term it spirit control. Call it what you will, it represents a vastly different approach that may well be found to join the Western scientific approach should science eventually succeed in mastering the secret of suspended animation.

During the decade that followed World War I, a Frenchman who wrote under the name of Jacolliot became much interested in the mind-power of India's fakirs. In one of his volumes on spiritualism, Jacolliot describes an experiment he witnessed personally. This experiment demonstrated more than mind-over-body control. It was an example of the projection of thought control to influence a non-thinking form of life.

The experiment was done with a small germinating plant seed. The French writer was allowed to inspect the seed himself; it was, he says, an ordinary seed. The fakir then placed it in a small pot of very moist earth, covered it with a piece of cloth and held the pot at arm's length.

He then squatted on the floor, the pot still in his hand, and slowly, while staring at the pot, fell into a deep trance. Jacolliot waited silently a few yards away, amazed at the Indian's ability to hold his arm rigid throughout his trance. The fakir's intense, concentrated, yet utterly removed, state lasted for about two hours. When it was over, he placed the pot on the ground, removed the piece of fabric that had covered it throughout the time he had concentrated on it and invited the Frenchman to inspect it.

Jacolliot records that a small but unmistakably developed plant shoot protruded by several inches from the then almost bone-dry earth. He removed the plant from the pot, shaking free the dirt that clung to the roots. There was no second seed in the pot; the seed was the one he had seen planted only two hours before. The only possible explanation was that the fakir's intense thought-projection had literally forced the plant into incredibly accelerated growth.

A study group in Turin, Italy, has long explored the influence of the human mind and thought-energy over plants. We all know people to whom we ascribe the attribute of a "green thumb." No matter what plants they cultivate, they seem to enjoy excellent results. Of course, much of this can be put down to sound botanical knowledge and/or plain old gardener's know-how. But neither knowledge nor know-how explains all of it fully, for there are those who may have equal technical knowledge, yet fail in comparison to the fabulous results a green-thumb gardener achieves . . .

"I talk to my plants when I tend them. They know I want them to grow."

"No, I can't explain how I do it, but when I work in my garden I feel I am directing my thoughts towards all the plants I work on."

"When I menstruate, I never attend to plants. The emanations disturb them. My grandmother taught me that—and she had a green thumb, too. I guess I got it from her."

Such are the comments one collects from Western green-thumb gardeners. Since our hemisphere is inclined to be skeptical when it comes to such matters, we still regard the concept that people can transmit energy through thought with amused doubt. And yet we speak with complete conviction about people whose enthusiasms are contagious. We accept without question men and women whose dynamic personalities are able to stir large groups of people. There are even colloquial phrases in the English language that underscore this.

"He fires one up," and, more recently, "He turns me on."

An actor or a speaker is at times said to "hold" an audience. There is something more than talent involved here—it is the ability to project a strong emotion or enthusiasm to another human being. To be on the receiving end, to become enthused about something because someone transmits his interest to you is a quasi-physical sensation. When speaking about people who can transmite their emotions and enthusiasms, we even use the phrase "personal magnetism"—and here we may well be approaching a scientific truth.

Electricity, energy, a force of some eventually definable kind may well be a part of the total makeup of a human being. If, then, this force can be transmitted, it follows that it must also be something possible to control. The West may be skeptical. The East is not.

In their quest for control over thought-energy and its projection, the Eastern mystics—be they fakirs, witches, soothsayers or seers—have explored a number of paths. Some go on the theory that complete physical excess (that is, total carnal knowledge) followed by total abstinence (save for minimal nourishment required to keep alive) is the way to release the full power of thought.

This theory leads to some unusual patterns of life. In Iran, there are male practitioners of witchcraft who will precede their seasons of intense involvement with magic with a month-long period of orgiastic living. Although they study and practice their craft singly, the period of

total carnality is most frequently enjoyed by a group of medicine men together. The male witches, incidentally, far outnumber their female counterparts in most Eastern countries.

Heterosexual and homosexual enjoyment, various forms of drug use and no contact with the daily world of work or family life are prerequisites during the month of carnality. Alcohol, however, is forbidden, since it is believed to dull rather than heighten the senses and to leave harmful traces in the body. The drugs taken during orgies are said to be releasers of the spirit and to have properties that heighten psychic awareness. These drugs do not, according to the practitioners, have any lasting physical effects.

After the month is over, having purged themselves of all physical desire through excess, the men do an abrupt about-face and go into semi- or total seclusion. Complete sexual abstinence is enforced; food and liquid are taken only in amounts deemed necessary to sustain life. Theoretically freed of all physical distractions, the soothsayer can channel all of his energies to his craft; his brain, unencumbered and fully cleansed, is at full power. The real work can commence.

Magnetic projection is not, of course, the Easterners' only field of endeavor. Cures by ritual and medicine occupy a large segment of activity; the Indian knowledge of the root rauwolfia has already been mentioned. However, most of the medicinal cures (herbal or otherwise) are accompanied by rote and incantation. Here, magnetic projection again enters into things: if the witch doctor *says* you will be cured, you *will* be cured, and your belief helps the cure.

In parts of India and Tibet, it is believed that if one passes projected magnetism through a ruby, the ray becomes intensified and much more pure. Sometimes the gem is held in one hand; the witch doctor stares at it as he goes into his projecting trance. Sometimes the ruby is suspended from a thin wire attached to a pole or a slender tripod. Some fakirs wear the stone strapped to the forehead. All this is naturally laughable when viewed with

Western eyes, until one considers (in broad terms) the recent development of the laser ray. Once again, it is possible that there is much more involved than primitive superstition, but to find the link will take greater knowledge of both the human mind and the diverse aspects of energy than the scientists of today possess.

In Thailand, a country noted for its delicate temple dancers and exquisite forms of architecture, witchcraft also has an intricate perfection of its own. The heavy-handedness of, say, German witchcraft, is completely unthinkable here. Indeed, delicate may well be the key word for most things Thai.

But Thai witchcraft, light of hand and delicate as it may be, is still an everyday commonplace throughout the nation. Early in 1967, when the American head of a big Thai business firm disappeared mysteriously while visiting the Cameroon Highlands, the Thai newspapers were flooded by messages from scores of witchcraft practitioners. Variously billed as seers, soothsayers, telepathists and just plain witch doctors, all had something to say about the businessman's disappearance, whether it was to explain its reason, suggest its cause or present a prognosis of the case. The mail itself was not deemed unusual in Bangkok, although the volume in this particular instance was admittedly abnormally high. But was it usual for a witch doctor to write to a newspaper?

"Perfectly normal," was the stock reply. "Their opinions are held in high esteem here."

In Vietnam, the tremendous power held over the peasants by the witch doctors was discovered time and again by American medical teams. Dr. Bernard M. Teschner, of Scarsdale, New York, spent two months in the Mekong Delta under the auspices of the American Medical Association. Dr. Teschner, a specialist in cataract-removal, worked out of a provincial Vietnamese hospital, with over fifty patients a day attending his clinic.

Commenting on his work there and the prevalent conditions, the eye specialist told the press, "Three-quarters

of the people turn to cultists for medical treatment. These magic men use everything for the ailing."

Everything includes such items as drumming tom toms and the liberal application of leeches in a weird combination of medicinal beliefs liberally laced with ritual. The Chinese system of acupuncture, a blend of hot cup applications and needle-pricking, is found throughout Vietnam. Other witch doctors use rituals that bear close resemblance to certain voodoo rites, although there is no directly traceable historical connection between the Vietnamese cults and those flourishing in the Caribbean.

The influence of age-old Chinese beliefs is a main factor in all Far Eastern witchcraft. Although many of these beliefs date back to the Shang Dynasty of over 3,000 years ago, they are held to be ageless and eternal, as true today as they were at any time. Spontaneous intuition is favored far above decision by methodical analysis of known factors. This preferred choice of method is due to the Taoist philosophical argument that all the factors of any given situation cannot be known, since no situation is divorced from the constantly changing universe.

In the West, we reason by analytical deduction; in the East, the Taoist influences dismiss this system as poor, at best, and nonsense most of the time. Their concern with the total universe explains much of the Easterners' partiality to astrology. The stars and planets move in accordance with the whole; an astrologer need only interpret their positions to understand their meaning vis a vis the totality.

Mystic numerology is another favorite Eastern discipline; cosmic—or favorite—numbers can play an important part in anything from a business deal to the running of an election. And when astrology and numerology do not seem to apply or to work too well, there is always spontaneous intuition—which links to magnetic projection, or clairvoyance, or "tuning in" in contemporary parlance. One might even define it as a cosmic hunch.

But all these things have long concerned the East—the ancient, still mysterious East, now believed by many to be

crumbling in the path of clear-thinking, sensible-minded progress. The present-day attitudes of such people as the Burmese can give the progressive-minded ample food for thought. Briefly, the average Burman has opted to disengage himself from progress, his government and all outside influences; Mandalay crumbles into decay—and the Burmese seem to prefer decadence to progress. The arguments which can be presented both for and against disengagement of this kind are vast enough for a book of their own.

If we leave the old and seemingly crumbling world of the East and turn to the New World, we find the three young, fresh and bright Americas—North, Central and South America. By all accounts, they should be free from such things as superstitions and witchcraft and other trappings of ancient decadence.

But they are not. . . .

CHAPTER X

Necromancy in New York

STRANGE as it may seem, there is no specific area in the complex of skyscrapers that is New York City where you will find witchcraft. It is found all over the city, in different areas and different guises, from the lower section of Manhattan through the tree-lined streets of the sophisticated Upper East Side to the sprawling tenements of Harlem.

New York necromancy covers a wide range of cults. It is a melting pot of witching lore just as it is a conglomeration of nationalities and peoples. Each immigrant wave has brought its own brand of supranatural beliefs into the city; new arrivals keep adding to the collection.

Not even the formidable financial bastions of Wall Street are immune from witchcraft, for there are those who secretly consult their astrological charts before playing the money market. In the small bystreets down at the southern tip of the city one can still discover a hidden fortune-teller or two, safely ensconced in one of the older dwellings, as befits the practitioners of such an ancient craft.

And there is nothing new in finding witchcraft in New York's Greenwich Village area. During the Roaring Twenties, the Village was the scene of a lot of roaring witchcraft. Some of it was genuine, part of it was satanism and much of it was fake. Whether the same breakdown applies today is a matter of speculation. No doubt time and historical hindsight will eventually tell the story, as it has done in the case of the notorious Alistair Crowley. Crowley misspent his lifetime trying to prove himself a magician and leader of a black magic cult. Time has

proved him to have been a mere amoral charlatan, a debauchee and, in all mystic connotations, a failure.

But that witchcraft exists in the Village today is a matter of public record. Publicly advertised record, which is certainly a far cry from the olden-day form of hidden witchcraft. Take, for example, the classified advertisement that appeared in *The East Village Other,* a newspaper with a decidedly individual hippie approach and an ever-increasing circulation. The ad read, in part: "Bored? Why not try WITCHCRAFT? Details on joining a real coven . . ."

Or, in a more scholarly vein, there is the advertisement that appeared in the classified section of *The Village Voice,* longtime Greenwich Village newspaper. "Seminar in WITCHCRAFT," the ad began, going on to advertise an astronomy course, too. Both were apparently to be conducted by the Institute for Research.

Then there was the New York University course, also advertised in *The Village Voice*. "Witchcraft, Magic and Sorcery," was the title of the course, to be conducted by Joseph Kaster. It was part of a non-degree series offered by New York University's School of Continuing Education. There was nothing flip about any of the other subjects (Ethics: the Dilemma of Modern Man; Sun, Stars and Solar Systems; Civilization of Spain . . .) and witchcraft sat soberly among them.

This is not to say that Mr. Kaster brewed up a cauldron of bat's blood in class. One feels, with a twinge of regret, that he certainly did not. But the fact that the course exists under such auspices shows the extent of interest in witchcraft in contemporary America and today's New York—and the degree of seriousness with which it is treated. These university seminars are not free lectures at the local hall to be attended only if one has nothing better to do; all courses have a price attached.

Still, one might say, that is Greenwich Village—the pseudo-intellectual gathering spot for successive generations of restless youngsters. In many respects, it can hardly be considered the most reliable fount of informa-

tion on any given subject, so one might be tempted to dismiss any manifestations of witchcraft within the Village, legitimate and serious as these manifestations might appear to be.

Very well. Let us move on to another community in New York—a community for which the city is famous and whose legitimacy cannot be denied: the business community.

Here, in the world of facts and statistics and vast sums of money, the amount of witchcraft practiced shows itself on the balance sheets. For witchcraft is a *multi-million-dollar* business in the city. This sum becomes multiplied even further if one includes such items as printed horoscopes and fortune-telling booklets which are shipped from New York to the rest of the country.

Within the city itself, the two main contributors to this revenue are books on witchcraft and related subjects and—surprisingly—voodoo supplies. Amulets, evil eye protectors, charms, hexing dolls and a number of questionable ingredients for spells are sold over and under counters in a great many stores, not all of them openly advertising their wares. In many cases—particularly those involving the sale of voodoo spell ingredients—the time-tested "Joe sent me" approach is the only one that will enable a would-be purchaser to connect with the witchcraft stock.

Items such as graveyard dirt and spellbinding candles are most frequently bought by residents of Harlem, since it is in this area that voodoo is most frequently practiced. This does not exclude its practice from any other section of the city, however—and the distribution of all the other items in the multi-million-dollar business is spread out pretty evenly over the whole of Manhattan. Not even the swank stretch that is Park Avenue nor the sophisticated environs of the Upper East Side escape the influence of witchcraft in New York.

In recent years, one Park Avenue resident who tangled with a branch of the occult was Miss Clara Hoover. It was one of those rare instances in which witchcraft finally ended up in a court of law.

According to newspaper reports, Miss Hoover said that during a ouija board session with a masseuse named Mrs. Margaret Falkner she learned that she, Miss Hoover, had an unusual problem. This was revealed at the session through the spirit of her late father, Frank E. Hoover.

"I was cursed by evil spirits and I was in grave danger," Miss Hoover was quoted as saying in court. She then went on to explain she had given Mrs. Falkner $32,000 (yes, that's right and the published record will confirm it) to lift the curse placed on her.

Mrs. Falkner, on the other hand, contended that she most certainly had not received the money. She knew only about some sealed envelopes, all of which she had handed over to a gypsy named Yuma. Yuma was going to lift the curse being suffered by Miss Hoover.

It must have made an interesting change for everyone working in the law courts, since the case—although not unique—was unusual in contemporary New York. Witchcraft, when it appears on the surface of the sophisticated lives of fashionable East Siders, is usually presented as "amusing" or "artistically exciting."

Jacqueline Kennedy is said to have used the adjective "thrilling" in reference to the art show that one publication named a "hex-travaganza." The exhibition was that of William Walton's paintings, all of them inspired by hex signs. The artist explained they were not pure hex signs, but were "suggested from hex signs I've seen on old barns over the years."

And those on the barns are real enough—but in this case, they entered the city via art.

Books are another road to witchcraft. One bookshop on Lexington Avenue has thousands of volumes on subjects that relate to witchcraft and the occult. Its owner, Zoltan Mason, has conducted classes on horoscope casting and says that "there is a relationship between the stars and every plant." *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* is among the many books in the shop, a serious and scholarly compilation of the properties of herbs.

Also stacked on the shelves are books on mysticism, the black arts, alchemy, the cabala, yoga, magic—you name it and it is there—and there is a large section on astrology. Ouija boards and tarot cards are also for sale.

No doubt many of the browsers and shoppers who go to the bookstore find witchcraft "amusing" or "interestingly bizarre," a conversation piece, a personality prop, an accoutrement with which to be different from the general crowd. With everyone trying so hard to be different these days, witchcraft items are being seized upon and used in the attempt to achieve individuality.

The rise of camp in the early 1960's undoubtedly helped to spread the use of witchcraft artifacts in these circles. New York, as the capital of camp, seems to have been at least partially responsible for the meeting of witchcraft with the sometimes talented, frequently peculiar, fashion bullies who clothe, shape, paint and decorate the restless rich.

Take, for example, the designer's apartment located in the high-rental East Fifties. Miniature skulls adorn the black walls. Tortoise shell is used throughout the decor. The designer himself holds court dressed in flowing Middle Eastern robes, casually dropping references to such items as rhinoceros horn—a witchcraft byword within the ranks of the cognoscenti.

A low table in this apartment is covered with what one, possibly unsophisticated, visitor referred to as a collection of objects that look as though they have been left over from the last black mass.

Is this sheer camp? Or what? Sometimes the line between camp and the occult becomes thin and extremely difficult to distinguish. Also, campy beginnings may well lead to practiced witchcraft within a relatively short space of time. Those who have already crossed over make their explanations short and simple.

"It's kicks . . ."

"Voodoo parties sounded like a change from the usual dull scene . . ."

"Someone in the crowd linked up with this magic bit, so I figured—why not me?"

The attitude changes shortly and one of two sharply defined stances appears. Either the witchcraft dabbler suddenly rejects the whole idea, claiming—somewhat too heatedly for credence—that it is utter nonsense and he wishes to have nothing further to do with it, or a blanket of silence descends on the subject. Often, this silence is a sign of deep involvement in some form of witchcraft, or perhaps satanism. Certainly, the project will have gone far further than the "for kicks" and "why not?" stage.

Linking up with witchcraft cultists is not too hard a thing to do in New York City. Frequently, such contact is made through the circles referred to as social but which are, in effect, business-contact oriented. This is particularly true in the fringe world that exists around the field of entertainment. Witchcraft cultists may also be found in the shadowy world of the call girl. As in Paris, so in New York.

Some time ago, I attended a business-motivated social affair—a fashionable get-together of people from the entertainment world, some of them quite prominent socially and artistically. The host was one of the top movie producers in the country. The guests were all in fields related to the film industry in one way or another (photographers, publicity men, agents, etc.). Not unnaturally, everyone had an angle to develop or a deal to sell.

There were also a handful of call girls present. One of them was telling fortunes with an ordinary deck of cards, laying them out on a coffee table. Curious, I walked over to take a look.

Her name was Nina. She was a vivacious, attractive, light-skinned Negress in her early twenties. When she told me my fortune, she warned me to withdraw from whatever deal I was trying to clinch, because, "You are surrounded by evil." She also said I would be given much trouble by "a pale-haired girl" and that to achieve success I would have to "go over water on wheels."

Dismissing it all as the usual quick-witted nonsense one

frequently hears from cocktail-party fortune-tellers, I asked Nina a few questions. She was more serious than I thought and much involved in the supranatural sub-world of New York. Basically a voodooist, she also knew several of the major seers in the city, including a man known as Mister Victor, who at that time had a consultation room on Sixth Avenue near Forty-second Street. Before the party was over, I had arranged to meet Nina at Victor's, since I was interested in interviewing the man and he was difficult to contact without the aid of an intermediary.

However, I did not get to meet him. I left New York shortly thereafter, partly because the deal I had planned to make collapsed and partly because a pale-haired girl was indeed causing me much trouble. It was not until I was driving over the Delaware Memorial Bridge that I realized the third section of Nina's prediction had also been correct. Stilted wording is often a fault of the meticulous fortune-teller; to interpolate might be to shade or obscure the meaning of the cards. So Nina had read them straight: wheels had shown over water, and the business picture had evil in it.

When I returned to New York, Victor and his consulting room were no longer there but the knowledge and practice of voodoo had spread immensely. It had even attracted the attention of a city commissioner: voodoo supplies were being sold in city-owned retail markets! This outlet for voodoo items has now been severely curtailed but it's doubtful that it has been completely stopped. Certainly the sale of voodoo supplies flourishes as never before, but the items are sold from privately owned stores, most of them in Harlem.

No one hangs out a voodoo shingle as such, but a small dark crowded store filled with religious objects (statuettes, madonnas that glow in the dark, framed drawings of a large eye captioned "God sees everything" in Spanish, and similar items) usually bears closer inspection. Philters, potions, graveyard dust and special incense for hexing an enemy may well take up the lion's share of the shelf

space—behind a protective barrier of traditional religious wares.

When City Commissioner of Markets Anthony Pacetta began his clean-up campaign against the voodoo market sellers, he sent a number of samples of their wares to laboratories and had the ingredients analyzed. The results were widely publicized.

Among other things, Commissioner Pacetta said that "Bats' blood fanciers are not drinking the genuine object."

The phials sold supposedly containing bats' blood held nothing more than water and food coloring, certainly not a lethal mixture, but not a magic one, either. The graveyard dust? Also a fraud: straight sand, and nothing else. The death candles (supposedly dipped in a virgin's menstrual blood) were found to be colored with dark red house paint.

With all the ruckus that the commissioner's investigation caused, it is hardly surprising that several voodoo cultists tried to cast spells on Anthony Pacetta. There were others, however, who unknown to the commissioner, were equally fervent in casting spells for him. He was, after all, cleaning out the ranks of the imposters and leaving the field open for the pure voodoo practitioners. Witchcraft, like politics, has many factions in New York City.

And so, all over the island of Manhattan, witchcraft is practiced and preached in its many different forms. The worlds of Madison Avenue and magic may meet for the first time at an orgy but the next meetings may have far graver consequences. A Puerto Rican housemaid, working for an affluent family in the Bronx, wraps a wad of molded bread in a highly colored ribbon. No one must move it from the corner by the front door, she insists. It will keep the house free from evil spirits.

A student of Eastern mysticism may be attempting to reach sartori in a Village pad next door to a group who are busy trying to cast a spell using an old French *grimoire* as a guideline textbook. And the pretty jet-set swinger arriving at Kennedy could well be on her way to

the latest sensation among horoscope casters—who just happens to know an efficient abortionist as well, the kind who does it all with herbs.

CHAPTER XI

Cults from Coast to Coast

IT IS NOT only in New York that prostitutes are among the main links to the world of witchcraft. Call girls in cities all over the country are often in the know when it comes to who's who and what's what in the going brand of local witchcraft or devil worship. A black mass in Chicago or a voodoo rite in New Orleans can easily be located through a girl who knows. Often, it is a well-established pimp who officiates at the ceremony in question.

As might very well be expected, voodoo rites, charms and hexes are most frequently found in the South. But there is a B-girl's trick, used by B-girls all over the country, that has its origins deep in a voodoo. Its use was first noticed by observers on the West Coast, towards the end of World War II. During the ensuing years, it has become general.

There is nothing unusual about seeing a woman file her nails in public. So when a B-girl pulls out an emery board and starts sawing away no one will pay any attention to it. Chances are, however, that it does have more meaning than a simple beauty routine.

As Lisa C., a redhead who works a discreet selection of bars in Detroit, explains it: "Say this guy's been buying your drinks and you decide you don't go for him. He looks as if he means trouble so you don't want things to develop. Or you have another John about to arrive. A regular, or something. So all you do is, you file your nails, you know, casually. But you see to it that the nail dust

gets into the guy's drink. As much dust as you can manage to get in."

What for?

"Nine times out of ten, it'll make him sicker than hell, and he won't want a bed for anything but sleep."

What about the tenth time?

"Maybe you didn't get enough dust into his drink," is one theory Lisa advances. "Or maybe the liquor was wrong. It won't work on beer. Martinis are best."

Maybe it is merely the liquor itself that does the trick?

But no. On this point, Lisa and many others like her are emphatic. The nail dust is what does the trick. They are positive. They've seen it work too many times not to believe in it.

Perhaps an actual chemical reason for this reaction can be found. But it was no chemist who started the present vogue among the B-girls. Tracing it back, from present-day popularity to its original source, one finds that it was well-known in the South long before the migrations of World War II spread their knowledge throughout the country. Another step into its past, and the conjure-man appears—that mysteriously knowledgeable man of voodoo who uses nail parings in a number of his hexes.

Trace it still further, back across time and space, first to the Caribbean islands and then back across the Atlantic to Africa, where nail parings also play a role in casting a *juju*, or a spell, upon a selected man. What is more, one arrives at the use of a related form of dust: horn dust, preferably rhinoceros horn dust.

However, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter, rhino horn dust is highly regarded as an aphrodisiac, not a jungle Micky Finn. This may be due to the fact that horn, although chemically akin to nail, is a harder substance. Whatever the reason, the belief in its magic remains—as does the B-girls' firm belief in the efficacy of a sprinkling of nail dust in an unwanted John's drink.

Another, overall aspect of witchcraft in the United States is the growing interest in the subject. Pockets of

witchcraft lore have always been found in different sections of the country. But now there is more curiosity about witches than ever before.

Occult book suppliers and book clubs specializing in the mystic have doubled in number in the last few years. Some specialized volumes have greater appeal in certain areas than in others. For example, books purporting to tell the innermost secrets of gypsy sorcery and herbal lore are among the most popular in the Midwest. On the other hand, people in rural areas are not too interested in extra-sensory perception, although many books and even a test kit for ESP are sold by mail in many areas. Sales of these items are highest in cities—although, conversely, it is found that people who seem to have an unusual gift for perception frequently come from less populated areas, where having a hunch about something is a normal matter—but where ESP is considered both citified and suspect.

The infamous "sixth and seventh Books of Moses," ruled out and out forgeries by witchcraft experts in both America and Europe, are also unfortunately reported to have been sold by the thousands in this country. Because witchcraft has a traditionally secret and furtive nature, the gullible can easily be fooled by fake volumes on the subject and equally fake practices.

New Englanders pride themselves on their lack of gullibility. But in earlier, more superstitious days, witches were hunted with fanatic fervor in the northeastern part of the United States, mostly under false pretenses and on the basis of false evidence. Nowadays, however, the witchcraft lore and learning that survives in the region is of a basic and valid nature.

Herbal knowledge is among the New England specialties, as is palm-reading. There are also New Englanders who have the gift of water-divining, a peculiar phenomenon which may eventually be explained by some form of electricity or magnetism.

A water-diviner will grasp a forked hazel branch in both hands and walk slowly over the terrain, looking for

water sources. It is said that when he comes to a part of the land where water flows subterraneously, the stick will bend earthwards and vibrate violently, almost like a spring. Digging at the indicated spot will produce a water well.

Many people consult the New England palm-reading witches. It is even said (although never officially) that the police in the region sometimes consult with these supranaturally endowed women on certain difficult cases. Among the famous who make no bones of having done so is the talented actress Mia Farrow, young wife of singer Frank Sinatra.

Miss Farrow, talking to an interviewer about her childhood, spoke of the Vermont witches as "these wise old ladies who are marvelous at divining things." She was eighteen when one of them read her palm; the future Mrs. Sinatra's hand was evidently a markedly interesting one.

"The witch said I could do anything I wanted to do, or have anything I wanted," Miss Farrow is quoted as saying. "She said there was enormous success in my palm . . . Everything is in it . . . The witch told me to be careful what I wished for."

The young girl's force of spirit and strength of character, marked on her palm and accurately interpreted by the wise old ladies, have certainly been demonstrated in the ensuing years. And Miss Farrow is not the only notable person who has learned the potential of the future from a New England witch—but most others are either too embarrassed or too shy to tell of their faith in the supranatural. Yet many people—both famous personalities and just plain folks—return from a New England visit with a palm-reading behind them and a witchcraft memento in their luggage in the form of the delicate glass globe "witch ball" that for centuries has been vaunted as a protective charm against ill fortune.

From New England to Washington, D.C., is not a long trip—but to stretch one's thoughts from witchcraft to Jeane Dixon may indeed require effort. The layman may find it hard to consider Mrs. Dixon's exceptional powers

of prophecy connected to witchcraft at all—and yet, that is more the fault of the *reputation* of witchcraft, than the facts themselves.

Jeane Dixon, the Washington housewife who has foretold such events as the assassination of President Kennedy, possesses a most unusual gift. It may not fall in what the general public believes to be the spectrum of witchcraft but no one will argue that this gift is one which is beyond our powers of physical explanation. It is, without any doubt, an exceedingly strong manifestation of tuning in to a greater power.

In this sense, Mrs. Dixon's supranatural talent is directly related to that of Dutchman Peter Hurkos or any of the other seers already mentioned. According to Ruth Montgomery, who has written about Jeane Dixon extensively, Mrs. Dixon undergoes many of the physical symptoms that have been described as occupational hazards by a number of other people with supranatural gifts.

Before seeing an event that is to take place in the future, Mrs. Dixon apparently feels a sense of withdrawal. After she visualizes the future event, she feels deep exhaustion. The same symptoms have been displayed by other mediums and seers, including Eastern fakirs.

Also, like other seers, Mrs. Dixon never accepts any money for her prophetic talents. She is said to use her power only for the benefit of others and has little or no control over the visions that come to her, forecasting world-shaking events.

"To use it deliberately is to destroy it," a European seer, who prefers to remain anonymous, has explained to me. "You can probably control it completely once or twice. But then you would be through—perhaps forever or perhaps only for several years. It depends. It's very hard to explain. I only know that to use it—to force it to work—would distort everything immediately and destroy it soon after."

The accuracy of Jeane Dixon's prophecy about the late President and a subsequent book about her unusual and

inexplicable gift no doubt added fuel to the growing interest in the occult and supranatural.

At about the same time (in a much lighter vein) the television industry added its own inimitable touch with a program called "Bewitched" that enjoyed great popularity. Here again was something spreading the witchcraft word, albeit in a fantasy, situation-comedy manner. The significant point about this program, however, is that not so many years ago no television network would have dared consider it. Witchcraft, as a theme for mass media, would have been unthinkable.

In a remarkably short space of time, this attitude has been reversed. And thus it is that through the television screen the idea of magic and witchcraft have entered many homes, among them thousands of suburban homes, giving added impetus and popularity to another rising phenomenon, the witchcraft party.

In its simplest form, a suburban witchcraft party is an extension of a female get-together and gab-fest—but with a difference. Just as certain manufacturers have popularized their wares by introducing them to housewives at neighborhood coffee klatches, so the witchcraft party has an added attraction—an invited palmist or fortune-teller. Coffee, cakes and futures are all enjoyed, intermingled with socializing. Sometimes the proceeds have even been given to a local charity. Others are non-profit meetings; a small fee is paid by each person attending to cover the palmist's fee for the afternoon.

"It made for something different," explains a Milwaukee housewife who held her first witch party a few years ago. "We all enjoyed it—and none of us took it seriously, of course."

The "of course" is said defensively—expressing an attitude that would hardly be necessary if no one had taken it seriously. But witchcraft is an insidious affair. For every ten people who may ignore it at first contact, there is sure to be at least one whose curiosity and interest are aroused. More knowledge will be wanted and, most likely, sought. The deeper waters are soon reached.

Seances, once thought to be a dying art, are now on the increase. Such sessions are not always conducted by a medium, however. Genuine mediums are relatively rare, particularly in suburbia, and, anyway, there are other methods of dabbling with the occult.

One such form of occultism requires only a table, a stemmed glass and two or more people. (Though it tends to work better if there are at least four persons present.) Sometimes the letters of the alphabet are laid out on the table in a circle; sometimes only "yes" and "no" markers are placed at either end. The glass, stem up, is placed in the center of the table. All those participating place their index fingers over the base of the glass, barely touching its surface or, in some cases, a fraction of an inch above it.

Such sessions are usually held in a quiet, dark room to facilitate concentration. The participants at these sessions ask questions, often about the future. If the proper rapport is established, the glass will actually move, either toward "yes" or "no" or to the letters, spelling out words in answer to the questions. Before any general questions can be put, however, it is necessary for the company to ascertain that the spirit or power whose guidance they seek is actually present at the seance. So each session must begin with the question "Are you there?" Not until the glass has signified the answer "yes" can the session begin. It has been known, in cases where a skeptic has been present, for the spirit to refuse to cooperate.

Although disbelievers will immediately point out that one member of the seance can easily push the glass without the others being aware of it, this is not actually so. Pushing, or trying to push the upturned glass, is far more likely to impede its movement, or so to interrupt its motion as to make the trick obvious.

What, then, makes the glass move? It would seem that some form of electricity, the personal electric auras of the people who are concentrating on the glass, is once again the most likely answer. But the suburbanites indulging in such seances are hardly interested in the possible scientific explanation. The movement of the glass—towards "yes"

or "no" or the word which is being spelled out—is where their interest lies.

On a nationwide scale, both magazines and newspapers reveal the reviving interest in the supranatural. More and more publications are carrying such staple items as horoscope columns. These are frequently read with an attitude of "Of course, I don't believe a word of it, *but* . . ."

But the giver of the opinion turns to the horoscope page every day, week or month and, in many cases, is secretly influenced by whatever the column says. It is no secret that some of these columns are purely journalistic invention. Others, on the other hand, are serious compilations of horoscopes cast according to the accepted laws of astrology.

The *Ladies' Home Journal*, for example, long a respected women's magazine in this country, now runs a monthly horoscope column by Sybil Leek. Mrs. Leek, lately of England, is a self-professed witch of high and famous standing. The column that runs under her byline is not sensation-seeking. Rather, it is a well-presented line-up of horoscopes.

There are also fashion magazines that have succumbed to the lure of horoscope columns. These, understandably, tend to hold fashion to the fore, but some are nonetheless well done. They are undoubtedly widely read, too.

Returning, however, to the witch party, which is becoming more and more common today, it is easy enough to see how the links from palmist to seance to possible satanism or related orgiastic rites can swiftly form a chain. Since many suburbanites have long been known to seek ways to ameliorate their boredom, the lure of the sexually flamboyant black mass ceremonies can well be understood.

Experts feel that it is precisely this sort of amateur meddling in witchcraft that can cause serious harm to the psyche of the persons involved, but there is little anyone can do to prevent this.

"Nobody should *play* with witchcraft," says one longtime student of the occult. "People think it's a game, like

wife-swapping, or something. Then they contact someone who is really serious and, suddenly, they're out of their depth. If they have any sense, they get scared and back off. If not—well, it can get messy."

"Messy" has, on occasion, meant suicide. It has also led to murder.

George Ash was in his early forties when he went to San Diego. He was separated from his blonde wife, Roselyn, and mad at the world in general. He alternated by thinking he hated Roselyn, to being sure that the one thing he wanted was his wife by his side. It was while he was in San Diego that he bought a blonde-haired doll.

He took it to Mexico where he had it hexed by a local witch. Ash specified that he wanted a powerful spell placed on the doll. The Mexican *bruja* incanted accordingly and then thrust a long pin through the doll's chest, right where the heart would be. Fully believing in the doom doll, George Ash wrapped it up and sent it—pin still in place—to his estranged wife, who had by then settled down in Pensacola, Florida.

Weeks passed. Exactly what Ash thought or expected to happen is not quite clear, but finally he grew tired of waiting and made the trip to Pensacola himself. He arrived at Roselyn's trailer and learned that she was no longer his wife. She had gotten a divorce and was already remarried. And, yes, she had received the doll in the mail—but she did not feel there was anything more to discuss with George. . .

Ash went berserk, shooting five bullets through the trailer door. Roselyn also took out a gun. It can only be conjecture, it seems likely that the threat signaled by the arrival of the doll may have persuaded the ex-Mrs. Ash to keep a defensive gun handy. At any rate, the doom doll looked down from its place on the shelf while the ex-husband and wife shot each other to death. Police later found Roselyn in the bathtub, five bullets in her body. George, with two slugs lodged inside him, died on the way to the hospital.

But the meddlers in witchcraft are not nearly so violent

as a general rule. Some indeed, are innovators, and, as such, can be considered amusing, even though the innovation is more malarkey than witchcraft or magic. Thus, one may want to take a grain of salt in forming an opinion of the newly organized Satanist Church (also known as the Satanic Church)—a name which in itself might give the devil pause for thought.

It came to fame because of a marriage ceremony. This took place in San Francisco early in 1967. The founder of the church and performer of the ceremony was Anton Szandor Lavey (also spelled LaVey, depending on which account one read). Mr. Lavey, described in one newspaper as a former circus calliope player, conducted the ceremony using the nude body of a young girl, Lois Murgenstrumm, as the top of the altar. Lavey explained that this was done to symbolize earthly pleasure.

Clad in long robes and a headpiece that can best be described as a balaclava with horns, the erstwhile calliope player-turned-priest uttered incantations (in a language he said he had invented), recited special poetry (in more readily understood English), made use of a gong, bells, a chalice and a sword and explained anything that needed explanation to the newsmen and photographers (who made up half the number of wedding guests). The bride was clad in red, the groom described himself as "a member of society" and Miss Murgenstrumm lay on the top of the altar, her long red hair contrasting nicely with the purple velvet draped beneath her.

Insofar as the state of California was concerned, the legality of the marriage was a matter for discussion—as was the obtaining of a marriage license. The couple, Judith Case and John Raymond, had not obtained one at the time of the satanic ceremony.

Lavey explained, "I am an ordained clergyman in the Satanic Church, which I founded and which the law may not recognize."

He also explained that the ceremony was the first of its kind and that he had put it together from his knowledge

of witchcraft and the related arts, subjects he had been studying for fifteen years.

To dismiss it all as camp would be a mistake, for in that manner one can often miss the deeper meaning behind the facade of witchcraft, the truth that keeps the craft—and interest in its practice—snow-balling today.

CHAPTER XII

Ave Voodoo

IT MAY WELL be that voodoo has captured the layman's imagination more than any other form of magic or occult worship. To the outsider, the whispered and hinted at rites of voodoo are lushly mysterious happenings, excited to frenzy by the pounding of jungle drums and saturated, from start to finish, with bizarre and exotic sexual activity.

As it happens, the outsider is not all that far wrong, although he probably underestimates the sexual connotations of other forms of witchcraft, if he considers sex the prerogative of voodoo. But there can be no doubt about one thing—voodoo, perhaps even in the sound of its name, entices the senses with a tropical sensuality that northern, more ascetic witchcraft would be hard put to match.

Voodoo or *vaudou,* or *vudu,* or *vodu,* or *vodum*—is essentially *la magie des negres,* the magic of the blacks, although not necessarily black magic. It is African in origin, and it is not only some of the rites that reveal its Trans-Atlantic ancestry. The word "voodoo" itself comes from Africa.

In Ewe, a language spoken in certain sections of western Africa, *vudu* means gods. From *vudu* in Africa to voodoo in the islands of the Caribbean is an easy step. As a matter of fact, another word has bridged the ocean in much the same manner.

A related form of sorcery, known by native tribes as *obi,* is extensively practiced in western Africa. In the section we now know as Ghana, the Akau tribe use the

word *obayifo* to signify a witch, or one with the power of *obi.* The word *obi* is also used to denote a fetish or charm used within the rites of *obi* sorcery.

Cross the ocean, and you find the word "obeah"—and a transplanted form of *obi* sorcery—on the island of Jamaica. Both sets of words—*obi*/obeah and *vudu*/voodoo—can mean either the school of sorcery or a fetish used within that school. The word voodoo even goes one step further on this side of the ocean and becomes a colloquial but much-used verb. To voodoo means to hex, to cast a spell. ("To hoodoo" an Americanization of voodoo, became a popular expression in the 1920's.)

But it is not the etymology of voodoo that has fascinated outsiders for so many years. It is its lushness, its association with warm, velvety, yet mystical, tropical nights and its emphasis on carnality that interest the majority. Certainly, people more readily accept the existence of voodoo in its tropical setting than they accept the existence of a coven of witches in a more temperate climate and "civilized" atmosphere. But even in the temperate climate of the United States we have come to accept the voodoo term "zombie" in our language. We use it to describe a deadbeat, a non-productive person, someone with no will or character of his own.

The word originally came from west Africa. There, *xombi* or *zombi* is the python god. Voodoo is, in essence, a primitive form of serpent worship. And the essence remains the same on both sides of the Atlantic.

The sexual aspects and the phallic symbolism of serpent worship need hardly be elaborated upon. Unlike the Biblical serpent which plays the part of tempter, beguiling Eve to pluck the apple which brought about man's fall from innocence and grace, the snake in voodoo is not an evil or negative force. To the contrary, the snake in voodoo is the symbol of the power of life and of the invisible spirit beyond tangible reality.

Voodoo has crystallized and become stronger since it took its long sea voyage. Now its practice is at its most intense in the Caribbean, although it is also found exten-

sively in some of our Southern states. A related form of sorcery known as *macumba,* exists in Brazil. But though the two cults are related, *macumba* is not quite the same thing.

Caribbean voodoo, fostered in secrecy and hatred against the whites during the days of slavery, is now a widespread belief throughout the islands. A change or augmentation here and there gives the rites practiced on each island their own subtle individuality. Possibly the voodoo practice is strongest on the troubled piece of land that makes up Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Jamaica is also a focal point of voodoo, but in a somewhat more colorful, gay and possibly less pernicious manner.

Nonetheless, the basic format of the cult remains the same, no matter where it is practiced or what its individual variations may be. Its rites can be conducted by both men and women. Sorcerers and sorceresses sometimes vie for power, magic or otherwise, by performing feats of witchcraft in an attempt to outdo each other.

Witches in the voodoo hierarchy are most commonly referred to as *papalois* and *mamalois*. It has been suggested that the words *papaloi* comes from the combination of the French words for father and law—that is, a *papaloi* is a "father" or leader who has knowledge of the law or truths of voodoo (with *mamaloi* being the female equivalent).

"The *papalois* are best. They make the strongest magic," says a native of Haiti who, despite his citified upbringing, would not dream of dismissing voodoo as fantasy. "But when a *mamaloi* is very good—then she is better than anyone else."

Thus, the mother-earth concept does play a part in the otherwise male-image serpent worship. Yet it does not prevent the rites themselves from following their original lines.

There are those who maintain that, far from serpent-god *zombi,* the moving spirit behind voodoo—at least in the New World—is none other than Ol' Demon Rum. There is much to support their attitude, if not their theo-

ry, and rum is indeed often an integral part of a voodoo rite.

Suppose you are going to attend a voodoo ritual. It is, perhaps, one of the moon rites and it is being held at night, out in the open, under the starlit tropical sky. You will no doubt have journeyed quite far, since the open-air rites are usually held far from town where no outsider might stumble upon them by chance.

The ceremony may be held in a secluded, tree-encircled section of a plantation, or deep in a part of the country that is, in reality, a no-man's-land. It may be held at the back of a hacienda, right near the old slave quarters. On occasion, it may be held indoors, but the double problem of space plus secrecy can make the right location a difficult thing to find. Large barns on deserted farms have often served the purpose well. There have also been many instances when caves have been used. But the cave has to be chosen carefully.

A cave, if it is to house a voodoo ritual, must not be a sea cave of any sort. That is, it must not have an entrance of sea water. Even a beach entrance, with the sound of the pounding surf, is inadvisable. Although no set of specific rules exists on this point, the reason for the stipulation is, in a sense, logical. Voodoo originated among land people, not among seagoing tribes or nations. Birth, death, life and its joys and terrors are interpreted solely from a land-oriented point of view. Furthermore, there are also certain rites that *must* be performed under an open sky.

So, back to the ritual you are about to attend. You will hear it as you approach, long before you actually see anything. The insistent, rhythmic drumbeat sends the message far out into the night. As you get closer to the ceremonial site, you may see the glow of a central fire, or often merely glowing coals in a brazier. To one side of the brazier will be either a black metal pot or a wooden trough. In some places, a large stone has been hollowed out to perform the same function—which is to hold a large quantity of thick, dark rum.

Voices mingle in with the drumming from time to time.

They come from people squatting or standing in a wide circle around the fire and trough but quite some distance away from them. Bare earth stretches between the fire and the first row of people, among whom are the hunched drummers. A lone figure darts across this bare space from time to time—the *papaloi.*

He will be barefoot and bare-chested. A cotton cloth may be swathed around him from waist to knee, or he may have on ordinary trousers. He has already mixed a variety of ingredients into the rum in the middle of the circle; he leads the chanting, which becomes louder and increasingly hypnotic in its rhythm.

Alcohol, drugs and a form of mass hysteria may already have begun to do its work on the chanting crowd. Few can attend the rites, without getting caught up in the mysterious feeling of unreality, or supra-reality, pervading the ceremony. Everything converges on the senses—mood, setting, the night, the noise. Awareness of the real world is suspended. The drums pulsate through everything, the swaying of the bodies continues relentlessly, the chanting becomes ever more hypnotic.

Suddenly, a woman will dart out into the center of the circle. She is either already bare-breasted, or she will remove her blouse as she gyrates spasmodically in front of the gesturing *papaloi.* Their intertwined gestures culminate in orgasm—sometimes mutual, sometimes experienced only by the woman, who then lies, in post-orgasmic writhing, on the patch of bare ground. Soon other women come forward.

They do so as they feel possessed by the spirits evoked by the chanting. There are times when their possession is greatly induced by the hypnotic abilities of the *papaloi,* which in many cases are considerable. But even without direct hypnotism, the ritual itself will induce the feeling of sudden possession—of being controlled by something other than one's own free will.

After a while the men in the surrounding circle also enter the patch of bare ground and the rite eventually becomes a sea of bare or semi-naked bodies copulating

more or less indiscriminately by the dying light of the fading embers. The drumming lessens as more and more men join the melee. At last it stops and only the weird drug-inspired cries of the men and women cut through the shuffling, grunting noises as the bodies continue to writhe.

By legend, all must be finished and over by cock crow, but in actual fact it is usually over far earlier than that. And—also only in legend—the drumming should continue steadily until cock crow. It was for the drumming that the equally legendary zombies, in the New World meaning of the word, were supposed to be used. A zombie—a re-animated body taken from the dead—is believed to be the ideal slave-servant of those who form the voodoo cult. The "walking dead," the zombies are also called, and their drumming for the rites would continue nonstop until cock crow, since no living instincts are supposed to exist within their re-animated bodies, allowing them to function like robots. At dawn, they return to the grave, only to leave it again at nightfall. At this time they are believed to report to their masters for whatever work instructions will be meted out.

Since the voodoo-believing population was mostly the slave population of the Caribbean, it is easy to understand their transference of the slave-master relationship to a mythical creature like a zombie. Firm belief in the existence of the walking dead has pretty well dissipated now, but in the depths of Haiti, there are still rumors of some very powerful *papalois* who have a herd of zombies at their command, to do their bidding.

Not all voodoo rites are as well-attended as the hypothetical ritual described above. Many are small and furtive, involving the placing of a curse on an enemy (with the curser being sure to leave a mark the enemy will see). The world-famous voodoo doll would be stuck with a pin voodoo at such a rite, to insure pain or disaster to the person represented by the doll. A number of other calls are also made to the power of voodoo, for beneficial as well as harmful purposes.

In Haiti, all of these things have been used by both voodoo believers and political opportunists—opportunists, that is, within the rigid regime of Dr. Francois Duvalier, whose very nickname, Papa Doc, is somewhat too close to *papaloi* for unrestricted comfort.

Rumors about Duvalier abound: that he is a voodoo practitioner, that he attends secret voodoo rites held in huge underground chambers, that he talks to the devil every full moon, that he can change his soul into the shape of a rooster, and so forth.

"Of course, you realize that Duvalier is mad," say some of the highly placed officials in his government who try, albeit unsuccessfully, to keep the economy of the country going. "And yes, of course, he practices voodoo."

But they will only tell you this behind the closed doors of their own homes when the servants are safely out of earshot. One never knows, in Haiti, who the nearest informer may be.

It is very hard to know whether or not Papa Doc is really mad. He sees almost no one; he will brood for hours alone in a room. At times, his public behavior has bordered on the hysterical, with tears or laughter coming in seemingly uncontrollable gushes. But mad or not, voodooist or not, one thing about Papa Doc is unquestionable: in Haiti, he is all-powerful. And this absolute power is guarded, promoted and actively reinforced by the dreaded Ton Ton Macoutes. With them, there is no doubt —they unquestionably *do* use voodoo.

"It is, in effect, government by witchcraft," one highly educated—and exiled—Haitian has told me. "Whether the Ton Ton Macoutes believe in voodoo themselves is hardly the point. The thing is that they use it on people who do. Through it, their power becomes total."

Not so, a British journalist declared recently, maintaining that the oppressed population of Haiti use voodoo as an escape from the harsh oppression under which they live. This may be so—but their escape hatch is merely an illusion allowed them by the Ton Ton Macoutes, who see to it that nobody ever "escapes" too far.

Voodoo, as practiced in Haiti or in Africa or even in New York City, is not a sometime thing. Those who follow the cult, find themselves set on a path from which there is no turning back—ever.

CHAPTER XIII

Potions and Politics in Africa

BY AND LARGE, the twentieth century has not fully overtaken Africa, though the impact of its arrival is being felt all over the continent. The shock of modernity vis a vis tribal culture naturally affects every facet of life—including witchcraft.

Ironically, African witchcraft has, in many instances, adapted rather nicely to the ways and mores of the contemporary world. Many an African witch doctor has taken the ways of the outside world and given them a twist peculiarly his own, proving yet once more that witchcraft is indeed highly versatile.

Because of the vast size of the continent and the startling contrasts found in its geography and people, there is only one generalization to be made about African witchcraft; it is to be found everywhere. To give a complete list of all its different forms and changing beliefs would be impossible here. A detailed work on the subject would make a book in itself—and a hefty volume it would be.

But from lowland to upland, from jungle to veldt, from roundhouse tribe to wandering hunters, there is plenty of witchcraft to be found. Some of the beliefs show a definite relationship to European beliefs, although no historical connection can be found between them, bolstering a universal-belief theory of witchcraft. In Nigeria, for example, it is taken for granted that witches fly, are most powerful at night and frequently suck blood, comprising a sort of vampire-sorceress breed, as it were.

A random sampling of beliefs in different areas includes:

1. Witches change themselves into animals, especially at night.
2. Witches fly, and they glow while flying. (One theory holds that falling stars touched off this particular legend.)
3. A witch has no substance, but merely invades a person's body, taking it over totally. (One tribe which lives near the Nile-Congo divide believes that a witch-spirit can be diagnosed only when an autopsy is performed on the human who has played host to the invader.)
4. A witch can leave the shell of his body and go about his work with no one in the village being any the wiser.
5. Witches have animal helpers (familiars, to use the corresponding European term). These are most frequently owls, snakes and hyenas.

Some tribes differentiate between day witches and night sorcerers. This is not necessarily black versus white magic, but a matter of method and sphere of influence. Depending on what you need, you either go to one or the other—it is not unlike choosing a specialist in the medical field.

And, indeed, the comparison is not in the least farfetched. Witch doctors or sorcerers are, by and large, medicine men and women. If nothing else, they are herbalists specializing in a knowledge of the medical properties of the plants in their area. They deal in magic, certainly—but frequently, it is a magic that does not put too great a strain on the imagination, be it magic of the poisonous, curative or hypnotic variety.

Before going on to the specifics and adaptations of present-day witchcraft in Africa, mention must be made of certain sects that have been mistaken for witchcraft cults. There are several, but two of the most famous are the Leopard Men and the Mau Mau.

The Leopard Men have long been accused of practicing witchcraft. This, however, is not the case; they do not practice magic. The Leopard Men are, basically, members of a secret society to which only males can belong. One might, by stretching the imagination a little, liken them to the Western brotherhood of Masons; Masonic

lodges are men-only establishments, brother Masons wear special ceremonial garb at their meetings and a certain amount of secrecy is involved in the organization. The likeness, however, does not go much further.

The aims of the Leopard Men are somewhat less than socially desirable. The Leopard Men are—allowing for a relapse or two—nothing more nor less than organized murderers. They may thrill-kill or revenge-kill or kill for a price; the motives matter little. What matters is the method and secrecy and reign of terror; all these the Leopard Men manage and manipulate very well.

Covered with leopard skin the head of the animal forming a headdress for the wearer, a Leopard Man also wears specially constructed "gloves" when he goes off on the kill. These simulate a leopard's paws, with claws extended, and it is with these lethal, jungle brass knuckles that the Leopard Men kill. The method is vicious, primitive—and hideously effective. But it has no connection whatsoever with witchcraft.

The dreaded Mau Mau, who have received worldwide notoriety, are equally undeserving of the label of witchcraft. The Mau Mau, active in what had been the British colony of Kenya, were basically involved in a political revolutionary movement. Its aims were the terrorization and destruction of the white settlers and the achievement—by force if necessary—of native self-rule. In order to whip up fanatical fervor amongst the African tribesmen, grisly initiation ceremonies were performed by the Mau Mau, with secret rites, oath-takings, and bloody animal sacrifices, but none of this was witchcraft *per se*.

In some places, the erstwhile colonizers of the African continent have tried to stamp out all forms of witchcraft. They have not, of course, come anywhere near succeeding, but they have managed to protect some people from certain forms of persecution or fraud. For example, in Southern Rhodesia, there is a law called the Witchcraft Suppression Act.

When one considers Rhodesia's British background, it is rather ironic that the former colony should be trying to

stamp out magic at a time when witchcraft is increasingly popular back in England. But Rhodesians argue that witchcraft in Britain is a far cry from the primitive magic found in Southern Rhodesia. The point is highly debatable. Nonetheless, the Witchcraft Suppression Act stays firmly active, and whatever may be said regarding the quality and style of African magic, its existence has never for a moment been doubted.

One of the few things tenuously linking the many different forms of witchcraft on the vast continent, is a brisk and practically continent-wide trade in rhinoceros horn. The business, both profitable and illicit, is directly connected to magic rites; rhinoceros horn, when powdered, is generally believed to be one of the strongest male aphrodisiacs that it is possible to use.

Despite its black market aspects, rhinoceros horn might well be called a staple in the store-cupboard of most African witch doctors and sorceresses. It is also frequently found in brothel areas in African townships. That the powdered horn is a powerful irritant rather than a powerful *juju* or magic, is something the majority of Africans have yet to learn. Those who have already found out the truth the painful way may try to tell their brethren the facts. But the saddened voice of experience has seldom had much effect on eager youth, nor is it likely to be believed by flagging, middle-aged males.

Rhino horn also enjoys wide sales in the Arabian countries, and a small amount is traded in Europe and the United States. Sailors stopping at African ports sometimes smuggles batches of it out of the continent. The biggest trade in rhino horn, however, is within the southern two-thirds of Africa itself.

The trade in this commodity that again links witchcraft with the sellers of sex, has not changed much in the last few decades. But African witchcraft has changed, partly in method, mainly in scope. Several factors have contributed to this change and modernization.

The far-flung repercussions of World War II began the shake-up of the witchcraft world. The influence of the rest

of the world on Africa became far greater in the post-war years; it seemed as if enlightenment and progress were about to triumph in the Dark Continent. Independence became a resounding cry. Progressive-minded Europeans interpreted this cry (rather optimistically, as things turned out) as a sign of growing responsibility among the formerly primitive peoples, even though in some of the lesser-known-tribes, a word actually had to be invented to describe the emerging ambition.

Then, not long after the end of the war, something happened inside Africa that was strangely reminiscent of Europe in the Middle Ages. A wave of witch-hunting started to roll. Part of it began in Ghana; it spread across Togo and Dahomey and went deep into Nigeria. As in the Middle Ages, the witch-hunters managed to rape, murder and pillage in the sacred name of witch-hunting. They also contrived to spread the word, just as their spiritual European forefathers had done. The wave stirred up much more than the witch-hunters had originally envisioned; eventually, it brought the wrath of the government authorities down on their necks.

By the early 1950's, things had calmed down somewhat. Witch doctors had, no doubt, learned to be more discreet concerning the places and times at which they would hold female circumcision ceremonies, but they continued to hold them.

Elsewhere, the frog test was reinstated for determining the culprit in cases of theft. This test requires all suspects to be lined up and to stick out their tongues. A live frog is then placed on each tongue. If the frog jumps off the tongue and onto the ground, the man is innocent. If, however, the frog takes a header down a suspect's throat, the villain has been found. If more than one frog takes the suicide route, the theft was clearly a gang job. Witch doctors swear by this system, but it only works with a certain kind of frog native to limited districts in Africa, which is possibly why the thief test is only used in these particular areas.

Sporadic clashes still occur between witchcraft practi-

tioners and witch-hunters or the law. In Nyasaland, two Africans were sentenced to death for the murder of two women, despite their defense that the women were evil witches who had used "the bad spirits" against them. Nyasaland was also the scene of the bizarre and famous case of the Crocodile Man.

The six-day trial, which culminated in the accused being found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, spotlighted the weird entanglement that is African witchcraft today. The accused Crocodile Man, Elarde Chipandale, a 35-year-old African, was actually more akin to the Leopard Men in both method and action than to the practitioners of witchcraft. Nonetheless, he tried to use witchcraft as his defense—to no avail.

In 1959, Chipandale was hired by an African named Odreck Kasoki to murder Kasoki's eight-year-old granddaughter. The fee for the murder was set at forty pounds and ten shillings. The American equivalent would be $112.80.

Chipandale then covered himself with pieces of tree bark. The color and texture of this disguise resembled the skin of a crocodile. He lay in wait in the Mwanza River, near the spot where the villagers went to draw water, knowing the child he was to murder would eventually appear.

When she appeared, according to the prosecution, the Crocodile Man seized her, dragged her under the water, stabbed her twice on each side of the body, thus carrying out his murder mission successfully.

The dying child's last screams were heard by the villagers, who rushed to the banks of the river. The headman fired a shot at what everyone thought was a real crocodile, swimming rapidly away, but the shot missed.

Later, Chipandale—back in normal attire—met Kasoki and collected the equivalent of $14 as the first installment of the $121.80 fee. He seemed satisfied with that and temporarily left the district.

"The trouble really started when Chipandale got a lot of modern ideas in his head," was the way an old Africa

hand put it. "As long as he was dealing with the old myths and ideas—like murder and animal-people and that sort of thing—he was perfectly safe. But then he went all modern. . . ."

It took several years for Chipandale, the erstwhile Crocodile Man, to "go modern." But in 1962 he returned to the district and, when Kasoki refused to pay him the remaining amount of the murder fee, Chipandale in up-to-date fashion, sued him for the balance. The court was a local one, presided over by the local chief, who treated the matter as a civil action. Kasoki was ordered to pay Chipandale two pounds, ten shillings ($7), for "services rendered." The case was closed.

And so it might have remained had an African detective not been in court that day, waiting to hear about another case. The detective later told the story at police headquarters. From then on, the Crocodile Man's days were numbered.

He testified in his own defense, explaining how he had been taught to turn himself into a crocodile by an uncle who was a witch-doctor. Magic twigs were all that was needed; he had tied them around his loins. This enabled a man to turn into an animal from the knees up.

The court, with slightly exaggerated courtesy, invited Chipandale to turn into a crocodile for everyone to see. But Chipandale had an answer for this. He said he had thrown away all his magic twigs and powers when he was arrested. The combination of conmanship and chicanery ended when the court sentenced both the Crocodile Man and the murder-minded grandfather to death.

Time passed, progress rolled on—and so did witchcraft. When Nyasaland became independent and changed its name to Malawi, witchcraft rose up the social scale and entered politics. It was no less a man than the Prime Minister who introduced the cult to politics. In September of 1964, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda let it be known he had discovered that some of his ex-ministers were trying to kill him by witchcraft.

Their magic, however, did not work.

"I am too busy to die," was part of Prime Minister' Banda's explanation for the failure.

But the witchcraft ploys apparently continued, usually identified as attempts to play upon Dr. Banda's fears of witchcraft. Within twelve months, it got so bad that the Malawi head of state was reported to have changed several members of his personal bodyguard. This happened soon after the treasured symbol of authority—a fly whisk—which he always carried on public occasions, disappeared and could not be found anywhere.

Some time later, Dr. Banda found a photo of a man he considered his mortal enemy tucked into a pocket of his clothing. This form of "jujube," or evil fetish, is also found in New World voodoo, and it is a menacing charm to those who believe.

Dr. Banda was not, however, the first African politician to bring witchcraft into politics. Some time before, a scandal in Accra, Ghana, had highlighted the world of magic and spirits.

Ako Adjei, at one time foreign minister of Ghana, standing trial on charges of treason, explained to the court what had happened to a certain sum of money.

He had, he said, given it to "the Spirit Zebus from the Kingdom of Uranus." The former foreign minister went on to say he had been told at a spirit invocation that the money would be doubled. Instead, however, it had vanished.

Since the sum involved was some seventy thousand dollars, which Adjei had originally received as a loan from a Ghana bank, it left the Spirit Zebus with a lot of accounting to do. Nobody, however, showed much surprise at the fact that spirits and magic turned up in a court of law. The newness of independence and future-looking civilization is one thing; the eternal roots of belief in witchcraft, quite another.

But there are times when the two blend together in astounding fashion. Whether the marriage is successful or not, time alone will tell. A relatively new group in Kenya, therefore, bears watching. It is an organization which

describes itself as a "national association of competent witch doctors."

Its formation followed a series of intensive anti-witchcraft drives. But since it was impossible to wipe out witchcraft altogether, a concerted effort was made to upgrade it and its practitioners. This experiment in modernized magic is considered to be a success. The association even has a corporate name: "African Repairs."

Its aims are to treat people who have been bewitched (by unaffiliated witches, presumably) and to catch thieves. Petty theft is rampant in certain areas of Kenya—and one of the association's favorite detection methods is the aforementioned frog test.

Who knows where all this may lead? Perhaps some day soon the witch doctors of Africa will unionize—forming, say, the Intercontinental Liberal Grand Witches Union, and thus they will have an I.L.G.W.U. all their own.

CHAPTER XIV

Witchcraft as a War Craft

THE CHAOS that followed the establishment of independence for the Congo has sometimes been referred to as the most confused war of contemporary times. Rebels of various types and loyalties, official government armies, rival government groups, tribal posses and a growing pack of mercenaries—all these and others fought a strangely patterned war of ever-changing sides, alliances, leaders and goals.

It was hard to know, from day to day, who was allied to whom and against what. Bazookas and blow darts were used side by side; the weapons were frequently easier to identify than the allies of the moment.

In such an atmosphere of uncertainty, one constant remained. Almost everybody—no matter what flag he followed or what arms he bore—used witchcraft as a war craft.

To the non-African observer, it might have seemed logical enough that the Balubas, for example, in one of their uprisings early in the Congolese war, should use witchcraft to inspire their warriors as they went into battle. Such had, after all, been their traditional way of warfare for centuries. But who expected government armies also to resort to magic? Or the official hiring—by a government army—of a witch? Or the witchcraft practices of many of the mercenaries—white European mercenaries, whose actions and campaigns can be labeled as either incredibly heroic or mercilessly brutal, depending upon one's point of view?

Drugs, potions, fetishes and incantations were all em-

ployed. Great users of witchcraft were the rebels from some of the eastern sections of the Congo, who at one point fought against the Katangese forces of Moise Tshombe (who, in turn, fought an on-again, off-again battle with the other official government in Leopoldville, which in *its* turn, fought an equally confusing host of enemy forces, including their own mutinous ones). A *dhawa,* or witchcraft, ritual was always a major event before the eastern rebel forces embarked on any of their campaigns.

The *dhawa* rites entailed more than the drinking of certain potions. They were also oath-taking ceremonies which set down rigid rules of self-discipline and behavior. After the conclusion of the ritual, no warrior could so much as touch a woman, or come into physical contact with a white person of either sex. To do so was to destroy the force and protection of the *dhawa,* virtually condemning the warrior to death in battle.

If, however, the warrior kept himself pure after the *dhawa,* he would enter the battlefield feeling completely secure. The *dhawa* magic would protect him against everything; even if a bullet hit him directly, the worst thing that could happen would be that he would fall "like dead" and rise again, restored to life, on the third day. This is, no doubt, a witchcraft distortion of the teachings of Christian missionaries on the Resurrection. But this detail did not diminish the value of the *dhawa* in the eyes of the rebel military leaders. It meant they had fighting men who fearlessly poured forth in human waves, shouting and chanting as they rushed toward the enemy, their courage drawn from an absolute conviction that they could not die.

This zombie-like confidence in the magic power of the *dhawa* was much heightened by the potions drunk before battle. Brewed by the witch doctors, the liquids varied in their contents, but a drug known as *chanvre,* or blue lotus, was used most frequently.

Colonel Huguet, a member of Major Michael Hoare's

mercenary troops and one of the most experienced men on the Congo scene, told a British reporter:

"The onrush of men having eaten blue lotus was not affected by bullets striking them in the body. (The colonel was describing a particular battle against a Baluba tribe uprising before which the tribesmen were known to have drunk a *chanvre*-based potion.) I have seen one savage still advance after four heavy-caliber revolver bullets had struck him, and he fell only a few feet from me."

The effect of the *chanvre* drug on the human mind and body is one of wild exhilaration, a quasi-hallucinatory suspension of reality during which one feels no fear and little, if any, pain. The aftereffects—should the warrior live to experience them—can be disastrous, since the severe depression that usually follows has been known to drive the recently ecstatic warrior to suicide. The best way to ward off this disastrous aftereffect, as experienced warriors know, is to sleep it off, much as one might sleep off a hangover. When the *chanvre* drink has been bolstered by a heavy dosage of the local firewater, this is usually what the survivors of the battle do.

The white mercenaries, who sometimes give the impression of having fought against *everybody* at one time or another, had occasion to observe the witchcraft of the eastern rebels at close hand. In addition to taking oaths and drink potions, the rebels were notably devoted to fetishes.

"We'd find the craziest things tied to their bodies when we stripped the corpses after battle," recalls Kevin Mackay, an old-timer in the Congo campaigns although only in his early twenties. "It didn't take us too long to work out they were fetishes. *Jujus,* they usually call them. Magic charms. Some of them can't have worked so good. I took this one off a guy whose head just wasn't there any more."

Mackay displays a piece of leopard skin to which a plastic flower, a small bone from a human finger, two pieces of carved wood and a number of highly colored feathers are affixed.

Many of the fetishes were not so complicated but, for some unknown reason, plastic flowers rated high with the eastern rebels. Bottle caps, small photos of Patrice Lumumba, the slain revolutionary, who is considered a saint by some of the rebels, tied bunches of feathers or bark were also popular *jujus*. All of them were objects that had been empowered with magic by a witch doctor. One of the white mercenaries collected charms of over two hundred different types from battlefield corpses.

Pinning down the exact witchcraft practices actually used (as opposed to collected) by the mercenaries is far harder to do. For one thing, any official questioning of members of Major Michael ("Mad Mike") Hoare's group will result in a categorical denial of any such practices. For another, if one probes further on an unofficial basis, the most frequent answer is, "Well, if we use it, we only use it against witchcraft itself."

At any rate, the mercenaries' acceptance of witchcraft was demonstrated by the deformed woman, the witch Wasamba of Stanleyville. She was accused of having caused the deaths of thousands of "innocent Africans"—although the particulars of her crimes were somewhat obscure at the time of the accusation.

The mercenaries, however, were in a mood for swift justice. Actually, the official executioners were members of the Congolese Army, with the mercenaries in secondary attendance. They are reported to have tied up Wasamba in a sack, thrown the sack into the Congo River and then machine-gunned it until it sank.

In times of war, and particularly in as confused and chaotic a war as the Congo turmoil, it is impossible to expect justice on an impartial, peacetime basis. After Wasamba's execution, her crimes were more clearly defined and her guilt was shown to be one of those problematic things without clear-cut right or wrong.

Wasamba had been a revered *dhawa* witch. Her deformity had convinced the natives her powers of magic were special. (Deformity has often singled out a person for such attention in lands all over the world. Similarly, mad people are frequently accredited with possessing the gift.) Wasamba had, therefore, conducted the pre-campaign *dhawa* rites. These ceremonies included the use of hemp and the marking of a cross with the point of a knife on the warriors' foreheads and chests.

At first, the unbelievable bravery of the Wasamba-bewitched rebels was so astounding that their enemies fell back, overwhelmed by the drug-sustained and apparently unbeatable throng. But eventually, the tide turned. Wasamba was disgraced because her magic was ruled to be strong enough no longer. Then, when the Congolese army and the mercenaries finally succeeded in maintaining the upper hand, one of the things they did in trying to clean up the mess was sentencing Wasamba to death. It was even reported in the press as the execution of "one of the last of the powerful witch doctors," but that was merely a flight of journalistic fancy. There were hundreds more, all over the Congo, and many novices came forward, eager to take the place of the fallen Wasamba.

One of the most lucid explanations justifying the involvement with witchcraft by white Europeans in the Congo was given, not by a mercenary but by a United Nations pilot. Based in Leopoldville, his flights regularly took him to other trouble spots such as Kindu, Stanleyville, and Elizabethville. He had this to say about witchcraft:

"It's a local condition. You have to learn to accept it as such. It's hard to explain. But all of us who come here know there's something weird about this set-up. Maybe it's the country, or the climate, or these weirdball political conditions—who the hell knows? But I look at it this way. Back home (Arkansas), I protect myself against the local problems with local weapons. I carry insurance on a number of things. That keeps my home and my automobile and things like that protected. I pay taxes. They help pay for the police. We Americans contribute to the (armed) forces which protect us from the kind of problems we face in our society.

"But the structure of life in the Congo—or, for that

matter, in all of Africa—is a far cry from the American way of life.

"Here, life is different. There are different problems. Maybe there's something to this witchcraft and maybe not. But just in case . . ."

Just in case, he carried several *juju* charms with him at all times and attended more than one of the ceremonies held by a Leopoldville witch doctor. His fellow pilots may have laughed at him—but many of them did exactly the same thing.

"After a few months here, I found I felt easier about things when I tuned in on the local traditions," one of them admitted grudgingly. He, too, carried a *dhawa* charm.

If witchcraft can be used so generally as a war craft, it must follow that it is sometimes implicated in acts of treason. This is exactly what happened in 1965 when magic did a double-take and about-face—gymnastically guided by Mama Henriette Onema.

Mama Onema was for years one of the "top" witches of the Tetela tribe. She was head sorceress and witch-in-residence to rebel chief Nicholas Olenga, preparing his warriors for battle with her own special *dhawa*. Her ceremonies included the "baptizing" of the men with special water: potent fetishes had been soaked in it prior to its use at the rites, and the *juju's* power was believed to have been transferred to it. After being annointed with the liquid, the rebels believed Mama Onema's word that it would make all enemy bullets turn to water. They rushed into battle completely unafraid.

But in early 1965, Mama Onema was captured by a patrol of troops from the Central Government. She was caught in a small village south of Kindu in the province of Maniema—a province that has long been known as one of the staunchest strongholds of witchcraft in the Congo.

After her capture, Mama Onema obviously did some fast thinking. For one thing, she was in her sixties, and sixty-year-old prisoners, particularly females, were of little use or interest to their captors—hence they were dispensable. For another, the troops were known to be extremely harsh in their tactics when they wanted to persuade prisoners of something. It did not take the witch long to make up her mind—and come to the decision that a switch of allegiance would be politic.

The result was the highly effective "black magic war" against the rebel holdouts, a war that was a bizarre blend of ancient beliefs and the electronic devices of the contemporary age. Mama Onema recorded a message to her former charges; the tapes were blared from loudspeakers in the primitive villages. Then a batch of leaflets were printed. Mama Onema's picture took up the major part of the sheets. Underneath, the witch's message was printed in both French and Swahili. It read:

"Rebels, lay down your arms. I have given all my powers to the Central Government. The rebellion is dead. Rebels who do not surrender are doomed men."

And underneath the message, was the signature:

"Mama Onema, sorceress to General Olenga."

In her tape recordings, the witch informed all who listened that she had exhumed the fetishes she had made for General Olenga, thereby rendering them impotent, and also that she had made a *dhawa* that undid all the magic powers she had previously bestowed on the rebel troops.

Yes indeed—the rebellion was dead.

But witchcraft lived on—to fight another war, another day. Though wars are nowadays largely considered to be a matter of science rather than craft, one of the oldest of all weapons can still be one of the most effective.

CHAPTER XV

The Spellbound Americas

PART I: CENTRAL AMERICA

AS THE CONTINENT of North America—and particularly the United States—has come to be known as the melting pot of peoples, so the rest of the New World has been called the melting pot of witchcraft. Magic-minded cultures indigenous to what is now Mexico and the lands to the south were invaded and overtaken by other cultures with other magic in their traditions. Later, still other cultures brought still other beliefs to add to the sorcerer's brewing pot.

The Aztecs, the Mayas and the sprawling empire of the Incas were primarily under the influence of their priests. These priests were certainly considered to have magical powers. In some cases, only a sorcerer had the right to sacrifice to the reigning god, interceding with the deity for the rest of his people. In all cases, the sorcerer was venerated and his power was respected, for who knew what frightful curse he might cast upon those who angered him?

To those ancient cultures came the conquering Spaniards, fighting in the names of Christ and their king, and firmly convinced of the evils of witchcraft. The Inquisition had taught them about its dangers, and they had often heard about the terrible *hechizos* cast upon people by *brujas* and *brujos*. It must be remembered that the infamous inquisitor, Torquemada, was a Spaniard. And, like all witch-hunters, no matter how vicous or obscene their tactics, he had managed to propagandize witchcraft itself

far and wide. The result was that a great number of *conquistadores*, whether high-ranking officers or low-born rankers, carried amulets to protect them from harm and believed absolutely in the powers of witchcraft. And as time extended their area of conquest, many of the soldiers learned to have a healthy respect for the New World of magic, too.

That meeting of Old and New World sorcery was not the final word in Latin America, however. In later centuries, the introduction of African slaves brought new witchcraft to the continent. And later, there were the immigration waves; much of the *streghe* lore from southern Italy landed on South American shores. A totally different brand of witchcraft, notably strong in Peru and Panama, came with the Chinese. East met West with appropriate caution and to some extent pooled their necromantic knowledge.

The imprint of the different cultures—and their witchcraft traditions—varied from place to place. The Chinese, for example, tended to group in cities on the western coast of the continent. But before concentrating on the South American mainland, let us take a brief look at a Carribean island where witchcraft has had a strong influence for centuries.

Actually, we are concerned with half an island—the half that is now the Dominican Republic. The other half of the island is Haiti—already mentioned in connction with voodoo. The Dominican Republic has more than voodoo.

Mainly, there is a weird branch of witchcraft known as *Liborismo*, taken from the name of its originator who called himself Liborio. His name was not Liborio (it was Olivorio Mateo) and, rather than originate a totally new cult, he actually collected and organized the various loose strands of indigenous witchcraft, laced it all together with a quasi-Christian ribbon of superstition, proclaimed his own extraordinary powers and claimed to be a saint. Liborio, who lived at the turn of the century, combined

his mystical rites with a little freelance highwaymanship whenever the coffers ran low. Whatever his supranatural powers—and there are those who swear he had them—his pleasures of the flesh were both considerable and expensive, and the fame of his harem spread far and wide.

Palma Sola, a small town almost two hundred miles away from the country's capital of Santo Domingo eventually became the focal point for the Liborismo cult. Liborio himself died in 1922, gunned down by gendarmes, but others arose to take over the Liborismo leadership. The gathered witchcraft lore of the island, some of it doubtless dating from before Columbus' discovery of Santo Domingo, now included a spirit—a spirit that could be venerated. The power of the cult is felt to this day, despite government attempts to wipe it out.

Now, to the mainland. Starting in the north, the first country of call is Mexico.

Here, the tradition of witchcraft can be traced directly to the pre-*conquistador* times of the Aztecs. Today, there are Indian tribes which still use Aztec words to describe various witches and sorceresses. Hernando Cortes himself, who led the Spanish forces in the conquest of Mexico, was much impressed with the skills and knowledge of the witch doctors. These doctors used herbal medicines, sewed up wounds with human hair, performed certain operations and used powdered obsidian to prevent or hold in check open-wound infection.

There were also doctors who specialized in midwifery; a witch doctor who did this was called a *temixhuitliani*. The man who dealt mostly with herbs and their curative values was a *tepatiani*, roughly the equivalent of our pharmacists today. But the *tepatiani* also knew the mystical powers held by plants. Many sicknesses were attributed to the wandering or temporary loss of the patient's soul. This may sound absurd until one thinks of it in terms of temporary insanity or a curable emotional disturbance. Then the notion becomes recognizable even though the terminology may be different than that used nowadays.

The contemporary Spanish terms for male witch doctors

are *brujo* and *curandero*. The difference between a *brujo* and a *curandero* is a matter of outlook. A *brujo* (witch) is spoken of with fear, since the connatation in Mexico, by tradition, is slanted toward the malefic. *Curandero,* on the other hand, is a benevolent term meaning healer—a person who cures. The methods they use are frequently identical, and a *curandero* is often called in to undo a spell cast by a *brujo*.

The cure used for some illnesses and casting out of spells is called a *limpia*—a cleansing. It can be a cleansing of the body or of the spirit, or both. Aromatic herbs are used, as is incense, the smoke of which is said to purify the air around the patient. The beard of a billy goat (carefully cut off in the hope that it will grow back) is also often used. Tied at one end, it is passed over an open flame and its pungent smoke then inhaled. This, too, is said to be cleansing inside.

Laurel leaves, sometimes burned, sometimes steeped in water, are also part of *limpia* ceremonies. But the most frequent *limpia* used is the one involving a chicken and an egg. Its beneficial effect is often noted within a short space of time. This becomes more readily understandable when it is known that the chicken-egg *limpia* is most often performed to cure illnesses of the soul, i.e. emotional disturbances. The combination of chants, prayer, belief in the ceremony, the symbolism of the rite and the weight given to the whole process often combine to produce a good effect on the patient. If a physical illness has a psychosomatic origin, a *limpia* would also tend to cure it in many cases.

At the start of the egg *limpia,* a stylization of the patient's face is drawn on the eggshell. An egg, being the symbol of the universe (self-contained, holding life, a complete unit in itself), can be used both for diagnosis and cure. Once the face is drawn on the shell, the egg symbolizes the patient. The evil housed by the human body must now be transferred to its symbol. The *curandero* begins to chant.

The patient lies flat, usually on the floor, as the witch

works. A collection of cleansing herbs stand nearby. First the witch "sucks away the evil" from the patient, literally sucking specific regions—the temples, the breast, the crook of the arms—often until blood specks appear on the patient's skin. This means the evil is beginning to emerge.

When the *curandero* feels the soul-poison has been removed or brought to the surface, the egg is rolled all over the patient's body. This will absorb all traces of the evil. After that, the cleansing herbs are sprinkled lavishly over the patient. The witch may also breathe purification over the patient. All through the ritual, prayers and chants are intoned.

If a chicken is also used (the egg *limpia* can be done with an egg alone or in combination with a chicken), it, too, is passed over the body after the sucking has been completed. Either way, the last phase of the rite is the breaking of the painted egg. Very old eggs are deliberately used; the rotten yolk proves to the patient that all the soul-poison has been absorbed by it. This foul-smelling mess is sometimes smeared over the patient's face and then washed off with water in which laurel leaves have been steeped. The full *limpia* has now been performed.

The intensity of the emotional climate at such a cleansing ceremony tends to leave the patient exhausted but convinced of his cure. The human mind being what it is, the patient, unconsciously, does the rest. It is, perhaps, a case of "Patient, heal thyself"—but with a little judicious help. This by no means invalidates the witchcraft involved. After all, much of psychotherapy works in the same manner.

Among the most interesting aspects of Mexican witchcraft are the methods of diagnosis. Eggs, as mentioned before, are used. The egg is passed over the patient's body and then broken onto a plate. The marks in the yolk tell the *curandero* where the problem lies.

Another method is that of pulse-taking, but not just at the wrist. It is also taken at the neck, the crook of the elbow and various other spots on the body. Depending on

the rate and strength of the pulse, the witch doctor begins his diagnosis.

(Unrelated to Mexican witchcraft but interesting to note is the fact that this same method has been used in China for centuries by certain branches of medicine there. Reference to it will be found in the following chapter.)

But, in this day and age when we are so conscious of and concerned about the drugs referred to as mind-expanders, it is the third method of diagnosis that is of greatest interest. It is used primarily in cases where the patient suffers from soul-poison of a more severe nature—when the difficulties undergone by the sufferer are insufficiently or incorrectly explained to the *curandero*. Then the use of hallucinatory drugs enters the picture. Peyote is preferred.

The effects of taking peyote are several. (This small cactus, native to Mexico, is usually administered in powdered form, the powder first being mixed with water. Honey, or some other sweet substance, is usually taken at the same time.) Peyote both exhilarates and relaxes; a sense of happiness and well-being rides side by side with highly sharpened senses. Colors are brighter, more vivid and even luminous; thoughts crystallize to clarity; the peyote-taker, his inhibitions lowered and his tongue loosened, *knows* he can express his every thought with quick precision. Well, at least, *he* thinks he can—and the words and phrases come tumbling out. Some may be incoherent, but the *curandero* listens to them all. His patient is pouring out his released thoughts—and from these, the witch doctor determines what is troubling the patient's ailing spirit.

It sounds very much like psychoanalysis and it is, in the opinion of many, a highly comparable method. Some disputes arise, however, over the actual value of unconscious revelations caused by drugs.

Now let us move quickly south to Guatemala, for we are able to consider only the highlights of the witchcraft in Central America. To list each country's complete spectrum of magic practices would be to write at least one

volume per nation. And I have chosen Guatemala as the next example to prove a point long misunderstood. It is *not* only the peasants who practice witchcraft through supposed ignorance or the high society degenerates who practice it just for kicks; the middle class—that solid, stolid bastion of common sense and down-to-earth realism—is just as much involved in the necromantic arts as any other socio-economic group.

A young American girl—a high school student—recently spent some time in Guatemala City as the guest of a Guatemalan family. The girl—I shall call her Susan—was there on one of the many student exchange programs now organized between the United States and other countries.

The people with whom she stayed were solid middle-class citizens. There was a daughter Susan's age, the father was a minor executive in a commercial company and the mother ran the small shop they owned. The family's style of life was comparable to that of Susan's family—comfortable, middle-income, non-ostentatious—allowing for national differences.

While Susan was staying in Guatemala City, business at the shop underwent a slump. To the American girl's surprise, the mother, while talking about the difficulties in the shop, announced she was going to see the local *bruja* about it. The rest of the family was in complete agreement with this idea.

"When she came back from her consultation with the witch," Susan recalls, "she had a whole collection of leaves and twigs and some things in a package she wouldn't show me. She filled up the bathtub with hot water and put most of the things she'd brought into it. Then she closed the door and when she opened it again, the steam poured out and the smell was horrible."

The foul-smelling steam billowed all over the house, during which time the shop owner would not talk to anyone but stayed in the bathroom tending the brew. Embarrassed by the whole incident, Susan went out for a walk.

"But nobody else thought it was in the least strange," she says.

Why should they? When something has always been part of the fabric of one's life, why should he suddenly consider it bizarre? So what if Susan's exchange-program hostess had consulted a witch in Guatemala City? Nearly everybody does.

One more sampling stop along the narrow band of land that joins North and South America—Panama. Here we come upon the practice of *quimbois*.

Its main center is on the islands that cluster near the Panamanian coast, its main participants the mixed population of the area. The rites themselves are also a mixture: an Afro-Caribbean type of voodoo-like drumming and chanting is combined with worship of the Christian saints plus a strong injection of Eastern ascetism on the part of some of the leaders. Scoffers maintain that *quimbois* is largely a tourist-attracting sham, but that is not so. The pageants and processions connected with it are the manifestations of the religious influence in *quimbois*. Later, the drumming and the wild dancing reveal the other aspect of the cult.

Because *quimbois* is a sea-influenced cult (many of its followers are fishermen, some of them divers), water figures in the beliefs and rites. Water is pure; therefore spirits can be housed in it or passed through it. Water is cleansing; therefore spiritual rebaptism or reaffirmation can be obtained by immersion. Water, a cardinal element, is the giver of life.

It is thus that *quimbois*, like so many other witchcraft-based cults, begins to join the mainstream and echoes Darwin.

CHAPTER XVI

The Spellbound Americas

PART II: SOUTH AMERICA

DURING the years I lived in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the home I rented was kept in spotless condition by a one-woman wonder called Adela. She was in her fifties, of partial Indian ancestry, a mother and grandmother, and she was an excellent housekeeper, an inspired cook, a much-loved character and a devout Roman Catholic.

Adela was also a witch.

Not that she announced the fact when I originally hired her. But witchcraft, like murder, will eventually out. Perhaps it might have emerged much sooner than it did, had I not been so deeply immersed in my work at that time. Thus, I was unlikely to pay much attention to a leaf tucked under a small stone at one end of a shelf, or to a bunch of herbs hanging on a kitchen wall, or to any similar and slightly off-beat house decoration. Had my mind been on witchcraft, I would have suspected something immediately. But it wasn't—and I didn't. It took an unwelcome visitor to bring about the discovery.

Adela had never liked the visitor. The man was a slight social acquaintance with whom I had a distant business relationship, and Adela firmly believed that he was up to no good. Her firm opinions (and she had many of them on many different subjects) tended to be based on solid common sense. But when Mr. X turned up late one afternoon, courtesy demanded that I invite him in. There was a business proposition he wished to discuss. And discuss it he did. Interminably.

Once he got started, he simply refused to stop. He went on and on and on.

The business deal was no good; I told him so over drinks. Still he discussed it, explaining all the angles. I had work to do, but the social laws of the land obliged me to consider asking him to stay to dinner. To prepare Adela for the possibility of there being a guest for dinner, I went into the kitchen and warned her what might happen. Adela's mouth tightened.

"Don't invite him. He will go."

"Adela, I don't think he will. It's late. I know there is enough food"—Adela was always prepared for unexpected guests, just in case—"and you know perfectly well I shall have to ask him to stay."

Her mouth became a thin line.

"Don't. He will leave within a half hour."

I did not believe this could possibly be so, when I returned to the living room. Mr. X was comfortably ensconced in a chair, nursing his third drink and fully prepared to go on talking about his deal. But after about fifteen minutes, he suddenly started shifting uncomfortably in his chair and, within seconds, stood up. He had to go, he said, apologizing for having taken up so much of my time. Not at all, I answered, lying like a trouper. Why didn't he stay to dinner? No, no, he had to leave.

And leave he did. It was the one and only time I ever knew this man to refuse a dinner invitation.

I went from the door straight to the kitchen, where I found Adela looking smug.

"He's gone," I said.

"But of course. I used the broom. That's why he left."

"You *what*?"

Adela pointed to a corner of the kitchen behind the door. A broom was standing in the corner, its handle pointing in the direction of the chair in which Mr. X had been sitting. It must be understood that the man never went near the kitchen. He could not have seen the broom or its handle at any time.

Then Adela explained, "You take a broom—it must be one that's in use—and put it behind a door, pointing toward the person who must be made to leave. Then you say some words, and . . ."

And the image of the door passes through the broom and enters the person's mind, causing him to leave the house, since a door symbolizes entrance and exit.

"But that's an *embrujo,* Adela."

An *embrujo* is a spell; the verb *embrujar* means to bewitch. Adela's smile was wide, the look in her eyes innocent.

"But, of course."

And so the facts began to emerge. Yes, Adela was a witch; she had always been one. She remembered her grandmother telling her so. Much of her knowledge had been learned from that grandmother who had also been a *bruja* and was dedicated to passing on the lore to her granddaughter. No, she did not find that her belief in witchcraft clashed with her religious creed or obligations. Sometimes, Adela said, she thought that perhaps the saints helped the *embrujos*—if you prayed to them for help. The witchcraft she practiced has no cult name, nor did she attend any rites or ceremonies. Adela felt (felt? No—she *knew*) that rituals and that sort of thing belonged to the Church. Witchcraft was a private knowledge, almost domestic, akin to cooking, perhaps, or to first aid.

There were cult gatherings in Guayaquil, however. A brand of voodoo, influenced by older beliefs from the Inca days, was—and, undoubtedly still is—practiced "secretly" by sections of the population. What I mean is that the police discreetly looked the other way when full-moon nights occurred and voodoo rites were held in swampy, vacant terrain on the outskirts of the city.

Black masses are also held from time to time in Ecuador, both in Guayaquil and in the mountain-ringed city of Quito. But fulltime satanists are rare; the black masses, that do occur, are attended mostly by sexually bored thrill-seekers.

An old witchcraft legend comes to life in Colombia

where vampires *do* exist. Real, live, blood-sucking vampire bats. They are quite large, too—large enough, at least, to be both frightening and dangerous.

But their victims are other animals rather than human beings. They have been known to attack beasts as large as cattle, stabbing their teeth into the heavy veins of a cow's throat just as vampires are said to fasten onto human victims in all the old stories. But these are nowhere near the supernatural and, in spite of their blood-sucking habits, the local population does not credit them with much in the way of magic powers.

One more brief mention of Ecuador, before going south to Peru: in the 1950's, the arrival of a Chinese doctor in Guayaquil caused a stir that was kept under wraps, so to speak, but which nonetheless had its effect. Exactly where the doctor came from, no one seemed to know, and the members of the small Chinese community were not saying. There were rumors that he had come from the Chinese mainland. There was also talk that he had been living in Hong Kong for years. Whatever his former place of abode, it was his method of medicine that was of interest.

The Chinese doctor used a temperature and pulse-taking form of diagnosis, very similar to the method mentioned in connection with Mexico. He was also an advocate of breathing exercises, many of which were akin to those used in yoga. Herbs and items from the sea (seaweed, heated sand, certain fish) formed the bulk of his prescribed medications; the herbal mixtures were administered in several different forms. Some were brewed and drunk, some were worn—in the form of poultices—and others were burned for smoke.

Word began spreading that *el brujo chino* (the Chinese sorcerer) could cure anything and that angered a great many authorities including those in the local medical world. So the *brujo chino* dropped out of sight, leaving a number of sorrowing patients behind. He may well have gone south to Lima, Peru, where the large Chinese popu-

lation would keep him supplied with patrons without any of the Peruvian authorities ever finding out.

Witchcraft is at least as extensively practiced in Peru as it is in Ecuador. And a great concentration of the manifestations of the cult is to be found in Lima.

There are fascinating shops in the Chinese sector of Lima, with many different charms and amulets from the Far East. However, I found the charms and amulets of the local markets, where the Indians trade and sell, of even greater interest. These items include medicinal herbs, hexing herbs, tree bark against rheumatism (a piece of it is worn on a string around the neck and the "bad airs" of the night are rendered harmless), bunches of laurel leaves to purify either the air or water—and a great variety of carved amulets, each with its own special power. Some are carved from stone, others are fashioned of wood or bone. Many are garishly painted or dyed. The colors tend to be bright and primitive, but highly effective.

The amulet that interested me most was one I frequently found offered for sale. I bought a small one carved out of bone and painted in blue and green. The Indian woman who sold it to me had a baby on her back and wore the traditional derby on her head. She held a tray of charms suspended on a string round her neck. A little boy with straight black lashes and torn pants squatted on the dirt floor of the market by the rows of charms he was selling. He had on display a white stone one without any decoration at all. At a fancy downtown store, I saw several silver ones, which I did not buy. A wooden one was later given to me by a friend.

The charm in question, which is to be found in such endless varieties all over Peru, is basically a human hand—a left hand. Sometimes it is crudely fashioned, sometimes elaborately intricate. Sometimes the hand is flat—that is, not outstretched, but flat, all five fingers showing an entirety. At other times, the hand is lightly clenched with the thumb placed under the forefinger and protruding between the forefinger and the middle finger.

The hand is a symbol in witchcraft all over the world,

and has been so ever since time began. Particularly the left hand. The left hand is the one that does not work for a living—or, at least, did not until modern educators found it to be harmful to force a left-handed child to use his right hand. The left in Roman times was designated by the word "sinister"—which in modern times has the meaning of evil, or of ill omen.

Left-handed human beings are, in any event, in the minority; they are the ones who depart from the right-handed norm, the ones who are different. And as such, especially in former times, they were deeply suspect. It will be remembered that left-handedness was one of the accepted signs of a witch.

But the reason people who are different become suspect in the minds of their fellows is often because they are believed to have unknown powers, or to possess forbidden knowledge or something equally fascinating and potentially dangerous. Therefore they are branded either evil or magic by the rest of the tribe. And the left hand has all the aspects of being either or both.

Were you to fly from Lima, Peru, eastward across the continent to one of the cities in Brazil, say, Sao Paolo, you would be moving from the Pacific-washed west coast all the way to the Atlantic-bounded east coast of South America, and the terrain changes beneath you as you made the journey would be impressively radical.

Lima itself is on the narrow belt of flat, arid land that runs along the Pacific shore. Very soon come some foothills and then, even more swiftly, the towering, snow-capped peaks of the Andes Mountains. These drop with sudden ferocity into deep jungle. It is in this jungle that the tributaries of the Amazon River start. Here monkeys and bananas and huge blue butterflies and various forms of tropical death can be found in large quantities. Should you continue to peer down from your airplane, you might see that this sort of terrain would alternate with hot grasslands, except for a hilly interruption or two.

It is pointless to give flying time, because that changes with every year and with advances made in aviation. But

from Lima to Sao Paolo is a long, long way. It is a crossing of the fattest part of South America; it is a crossing of dramatic but difficult terrain. There are no highways slicing through to make the route feasible by car, no straight-through trains. There never has been an easy way across. Indeed, there was hardly a way across at all, until the advent of air travel. And communication from coast to coast over this part of the continent is about as difficult as it can possibly be.

And yet, when you land in Sao Paolo, you are landing in a city where everybody—well, virtually all the local inhabitants—wear or possess a *figa*. It is a local custom dating from well before the advent of the airplane. And a *figa* is a lucky charm shaped like a hand—a left hand, with the thumb slipped under the forefinger, its tip protruding between the forefinger and the middle finger.

To make it all the more confusing, the *figa* is a symbol of the magic of Brazil which is called *macumba*—and which has its direct ancestral roots intertwined with those of voodoo. Both evolved from the magic beliefs and cults that arrived in Brazil with shiploads of African slaves.

Macumba is like voodoo in many ways: the drumming, the chanting and the state of semi-trance sought by the men and women who participate in the rites are comparable. So is the use of alcohol or drugs to help release the mind. So is the orgiastic aspect of the ceremony which takes place at certain feasts.

There are also *macumba* ceremonies where hypnotism—whether self-induced or induced by the rite leader—will cause a celebrant to become possessed by the spirit of the snake (the same snake one finds in voodoo) and quite literally snake his way around the open circle, belly to ground, writhing convulsively.

Another Afro-Brazilian cult that has grown to immense proportions since it originally arrived in the Western Hemisphere is *candomblè*. *Candomblè* has actually blended far better than any other cult with the official Catholic Church teachings—in a purely superficial way. This has enabled the *candomblè* followers to be accepted as the

practitioners of a non-evil cult, whereas *macumba* is branded as evil, thus rendering it even more attractive to a great number of people. The unwittingly proselytizing witch-hunters will apparently always be with us!

Candomblè, a lighthearted and most attractive mixture of magic and gods and goddesses who give protection or favors, easily incorporated the teachings of the Catholic Church of Brazil. Jesus, for example, has become Oxalá—and everyone knows Oxalá is the most powerful of all the *orixas,* or god-spirits.

Another *orixa,* on a lower, less powerful plane, is Iemenjá. She is the mermaid goddess of the sea and seems to double as a sort of aquatic Miss Lonelyhearts. Not only are gifts offered to her at her feast, but letters on problems of affairs of the heart are written to Iemenjá and tossed into the sea.

Both priests and priestesses conduct the *candomblè* rites; percussive music is used along with chanting in the ceremonies. Such high-spirited rhythm is directly due to the African ancestry of the cult, for the moment we go further south on the continent, to Uruguay and Argentina, all such African influences disappear. Although the slave ships reached both these countries, conditions and climate there were hostile to the Africans. Few of them survived; of their descendants, few stayed. The witchcraft of Argentina, therefore, is more of European extraction. No strong influence from either Africa or China has affected it at all.

Plants indigenous to Argentina, having properties of interest to herbalists and practitioners of witchcraft alike, include the now world-famous *verba mate* (ilex paraguayensis) which is brewed like tea and drunk from dried gourds by the gauchos of the pampas. Longevity among certain groups of these Argentine cowboys has been attributed to their diet which is almost exclusively composed of *mate* and meat.

Lesser known plants also interest the *curanderas* of Rosario, Bahia Blanca and the environs of Buenos Aires. These plants may be referred to as *yuyos,* or weeds,

which indeed some of them are. But some are cultivated plants, including the bush called laurel—which is not the plant we know by the same name and use in cooking. This laurel is a species of oleander, which produces a highly poisonous substance that can be used in an abortion-producing potion—one guaranteed to work, provided it does not first kill the user.

The recent arrest of Carmen Gomez de Rois, Chilean-born *curandera* and unlicensed midwife, focused attention upon the witchcraft that is practiced in the environs of Buenos Aires. It appeared that Señora de Rois considered her forty-year career in successful if unsanctioned midwifery almost a sideline; love potions and love spells had been of greater significance in her work.

When the house she lived and worked in was raided by the police, a huge collection of photographs, mostly of young girls, was found on the premises. Some of them had pins stuck in them, others had *yuyos* tied to them, still others had crudely fashioned charms—including wax-image dolls—attached to them. They offered a mute witness to the many love spells the knowledgeable señora had cast through the years. Other, more vocal witnesses—neighbors of the *curandera*—told of the señora's high percentage of successful spells, even naming marriages that had taken place after the witch had applied her art to a previously disinterested party.

It was her sideline in abortions rather than the magical mainstream of her career that earned Señora de Rois the interest of the police. But once their investigation had started, other aspects of the *curandera's* work came to light. Objects of collected evidence included witching candles, fetishes made of beans and various mysterious powders, one of which was finally identified as ground goat's horn—a South American equivalent of Africa's great rhino horn aphrodisiac, and every bit as dangerous as its distant counterpart.

The arrest of the *curandera* did not unduly disturb those who had always consulted her.

"She was an excellent *curandera* and we are sorry to see

her go," was the consensus of opinion. "But when we need another—we know where to go. There are plenty from which to choose."

Wherever one travels on the South American continent one finds elements of witchcraft. Whether the cult is *candomblé, macumba* or the local version of voodoo, the South Americans believe in *embrujos,* they wear magic charms and amulets to protect themselves from the malevolence of a *brujo* or *bruja*—and when sick in mind or body, they first consult a *curandera.*

In South America, witchcraft is a way of life.

CHAPTER XVII

Contemporary Conjurers

WITCHCRAFT, by and large, is a secretive affair. It is generally kept secret by those who are involved with it. This is particularly true in the United States and in western Europe, where the occult art is supposed to have perished with the advance of education and enlightenment (which is far from the case).

Nonetheless, there are still those who do not care who knows that they are believers or practitioners of witchcraft. There are also those who feel all secrecy should be stripped away—that only open understanding of the hidden arts can be acceptable in the world of today. Those holding this theory argue that witchcraft has much to offer many people and that its legends, lore and applicable knowledge should be disseminated throughout all the continents, thus stifling old superstitious fears and opening new vistas of benevolent magic.

And then there are those who have risen to sudden fame or notoriety through some publicized event connected with witchcraft.

Thus it was the death of Dr. Gerald Brosseau Gardner that brought the names of several witches very much into the public eye. Monique Wilson, Eleanor Bone and Patricia Crowther were among them. At that time, Sybil Leek was also in the news, along with the others, but Mrs. Leek is a unique phenomenon in many respects and has long held the attention of newspaper readers.

Dr. Gardner's death brought so many names to the fore because, for years, he was the chief, if unofficial, leader of the witches of Great Britain. When he died, he left behind

him the vacant position of leader, a large sum of money, a museum devoted to witchcraft and a squabbling group of followers.

"Dr. Gardner was a tremendously powerful leader of the thousands of devotees to witchcraft here," reported one British newspaper in its obituary announcement. He died aboard a steamer off the coast of North Africa. Much of his eighty-year lifespan had been dedicated to the study, research and explanation of witchcraft.

He was not a medical doctor, although his knowledge of herbal medicines was extensive. He was a Doctor of Philosophy and a Doctor of Literature, the author of a comprehensive study of witchcraft, one of the world's leading experts in that field and the owner and director of the Museum of Magic and Witchcraft in Castleton, Isle of Man.

Dr. Gardner went to Castleton after World War II. Before the war, he had spent an apparently uneventful career as a customs officer for the British Government. But from 1946 until his death in 1964, he blazed a trail through the witchcraft ranks that will cause his name to be long remembered. The museum alone is tribute enough to Gardner's interest and zeal—and the museum figured largely in 1964, the question of inheritance looming with importance in the minds of a great many witches. Quotes and opinions from contenders for the vacant position were scattered in daily newspapers all over Britain:

"I am the leader of a coven . . . I anticipate that I will take over Dr. Gardner's role."

"Unquestionably, I shall be chosen . . . the craft expects me to lead the way, now that Dr. Gardner has moved through."

"Moving through" is a term used by some witches, referring to a witch who has moved from one life through to another, in accordance with their belief in reincarnation.

It was finally revealed—by application of the law and not witchcraft—that Gerald Brousseau Gardner had nominated his successor and left what was described as "the

bulk of his estate" to Mrs. Monique Marie Mauricette Wilson, at that time a resident of Perth, Scotland, and a coven's high priestess.

Others named in Dr. Gardner's will were also said to be priestesses, hence the mentions of Pat Crowther, Eleanor Bone and Lois Pearson. A high priest was also mentioned; Jack Bracelin, a resident of London. But it was Mrs. Monique Wilson who inherited the museum.

Mutterings of discontent were heard from the ranks of the disappointed:

"I don't see why she was chosen. They say she's only been a witch for six years—and I was *born* one."

"You'll see. It'll be different when they sort out everything in the will."

But everything was sorted out and nothing changed at all. Mrs. Monique Wilson got the museum and all Dr. Gardner's books, papers and artifacts—a collection of writings and items on witchcraft considered one of the best in the world. She also received—by inference, if not by democratic vote—the title of chief witch of the British Isles. One London newspaper immediately dubbed her "Queen of the Witches."

This new leader of the witches of Britain is a young and attractive woman with dark hair and dark flashing eyes. The glamor image is a far cry from the old belief about witches being ugly and warty; that belief is as erroneous as the feeling that all witchcraft is evil. Mrs. Wilson, when she heard of her inheritance, told newsmen in Scotland that she, her husband and her daughter would soon move to Castleton to "carry on the work of Dr. Gardner." She herself would act as a guide at the museum during the summer.

"We will build up the museum and work to alter the popular image of witchcraft. It is *not* an evil cult," Mrs. Wilson explained to the reporters.

Another coven leader who stressed the non-evil aspects of witchcraft was Mrs. Pat Crowther. Tall, slim and blonde, Mrs. Crowther, who leads a coven in Sheffield, is also the antithesis of the old-bent-and-warty image. She

has proclaimed her beliefs on television appearances. Mrs. Crowther says that if more people believed in witchcraft, the world would be a much better place.

We have become "smothered by civilization," she claims, in speaking of the many ills that plague mankind. Witchcraft would be an excellent means for man to use to return to the natural law. She also quotes one of the witchcraft laws of her coven: "Harm no one, have perfect love and perfect trust."

If that does not sound like witchcraft, one must remember that the main commentators on witchcraft through the ages have not been the witches themselves, but witch hunters and witch-haters. It must also be kept in mind that witchcraft, like most things in this world, varies greatly from place to place.

Mrs. Eleanor Bone, whose name was also much mentioned as the possible new leader of Britain's witches after Dr. Gardner's death, leads a coven in London. She, too, stresses the positive aspects of witchcraft. There are many witches and leaders like Mrs. Bone—people who practice the craft and do everything possible to dissociate themselves from the harmful and church-desecrating activities of the satanists, with whom they insist they are totally unconnected.

Far removed from the madding crowd of Britain's witchcraft followers, believers, debaters and debasers there stands the lone—and somewhat mysterious—figure of Major Derek Boothby. There was a time when one got the impression that Major Boothby's life was continually harassed by hordes of probing reporters seeking information about his expertise in witchcraft.

The rumors about the mysterious major ran thick and fast. He was said to live in isolation in the middle of a wood, practice the blackest of the black arts (although nobody defined precisely what they were), have little use for non-witch-cultists and none whatsoever for the pantingly pursuing members of London's press.

One can hardly blame him for this last. The major's background would be sufficient to make him resent people

who used badgering tactics against him. Derek Boothby comes from what is considered in England as a "good"—i.e. socially elevated—family; his mother was titled in her own right, his father was an inventor who had great charm, if not vast success. Among the father's less successful inventions were "Jesus shoes" designed to enable people (notably soldiers in time of war) to walk on water. When the test pair had been completed, a group gathered to watch the results at the edge of the river Thames.

"The man sank like a bloody stone," was the brief report of an eye-witness, but such setbacks did not alter the senior Boothby's inventiveness or his charm.

Another member of the family, Derek's brother, James, was one of the ace-pilot heroes of the Battle of Britain and has since handled such varied careers as motor-racing and writing. This background indicates that Major Boothby springs from a family of both intelligence and substance; his expertise in witchcraft is a profoundly studied one and his belief is accordingly deep. He is not a crank and he does not care for publicity. But still the newsmen persisted.

"Finally," a member of his family says, "we talked it over and the easiest thing to do to get rid of them seemed to be to take the opposite tack. We told Derek to plunge right in and talk to them as they wanted—being terribly technical and detailed and scholarly about witchcraft, and then he could *bore* them all to death."

That is not quite what happened but, eventually, Major Derek Boothby appeared on television as "Mr. X" and gave one of the most learned lectures on witchcraft that has been heard in contemporary times.

"Our religion is far older than Christianity," the major has stated categorically, pointing out that the Christian persecution of witchcraft is what has forced witches to practice in secret. When asked about the sexual aspects of the black mass, he said, "Ours is an innocent religion, not a free-love jamboree."

From the high and esoteric pinnacles of Major Derek Boothby's attitude to the down-to-earth and friendly ap-

proach of Mrs. Sybil Leek is a notable journey. More than a broom's flight away, one might say—except that, according to Mrs. Leek who is also an expert, brooms were *not* used for flying and are completely outdated as a concept or symbol of witchcraft, anyway.

Mrs. Sybil Leek is a jolly sort of witch—jolly in the essentially British definition of the word. She is a motherly middle age and friendly and informative and she has a ready sense of humor that is highly refreshing. As a sample quote: "No, we don't dance naked in the forest. The bushes are much too scratchy for that."

Her familiar is almost as well-known as she is and a book has been written about him. He is Hotfoot Jackson, a tuned-in jackdaw, and he is usually seen on Mrs. Leek's shoulder when her photograph appears in the press.

Mrs. Leek, who first became well-known when she lived in Burley, The New Forest, in England, is now a high-powered traveling witch and apt to turn up in such unlikely places as St. Louis, Missouri, which happened to be the spot her boa constrictor chose to hatch her babies in a motel bathtub. Mrs. Leek was delighted about the event.

"It's marvelous," she said. "I'm becoming the grandmother of snakes."

Sashima (the mother in question) was described as "an affectionate boa," and the father, Fashi, was apparently not around for the birth, having elected to stay at Mrs. Leek's California home. The attitude of the motel manager was not recorded for posterity.

Mrs. Leek has also popped up in Ireland, filming a ghost movie. And on the cover of a book about Irish ghosts, as co-author of the volume. (Mrs. Leek has also authored books solo.) And she has been found in the United States, busily casting a hex on a thief who had been foolish enough to steal jewelry from her.

"That thief just doesn't have the slightest idea how sorry he's going to be," she said at the time, explaining that, apart from the fact she was hexing him, three of the rings he had stolen were magic rings. Magic rings are all

very well if one has a knowledge of the craft but if one does not, they—or rather, their power—is said to backfire badly against the misuser.

Sybil Leek also turns up every month in the pages of a leading women's magazine where her astrological knowledge is evident in the horoscope column written by her. In addition, her knowledge of witchcraft is vast. Detractors who maintain that anybody who gets that much publicity cannot be sincere should think twice before they level the charge against this particular lady.

By temperament a good-natured person, Mrs. Leek never lets the carpers and their attitudes bother her. She is very much of the school of thought that maintains witchcraft should be more widely understood.

"I'm all in favor of doing away with the secrecy about witchcraft," she says, but she concedes that not everyone agrees with her on this point.

Thought-transference and levitation (being able to lift an object by force of thought-power) are among the many fields of witchcraft that Mrs. Leek has experimented with. She maintains that she and another witch have been able to make a table "just lift off the ground" by levitation. Mrs. Leek is not the only one to claim the feat, but she is one of the few who will speak of it outside secret witchcraft circles.

Newspaper publicity has brought yet another person with a strong tuning-in on the power to the attention of a wider public. This time, it was the whirlwind romance and marriage between British screen comedian Peter Sellers and wide-eyed Swedish starlet Britt Eklund which caused a great many people to hear, for the first time, about a man called Maurice Woodruff. A clairvoyant and an astrologer, Woodruff has been a close adviser of Sellers for years. But the actor is merely one of many clients who consult him. Woodruff's gift of clairvoyance is an inherited one, he says. His mother was also a clairvoyant.

He gave a fair demonstration of his gift when he first predicted to Peter Sellers that he would meet and marry a girl with the initials B.E. At the time of the prediction,

Sellers was just recovering from the emotional shock of the break-up of his first marriage and his divorce, and he was frankly skeptical, believing that he would never marry again. Very shortly afterwards, as Woodruff had foretold, he met a girl called Britt Eklund.

Sellers is only one of many stars of the entertainment world who declare they would not dream of taking any important step—in either their work or their private lives—without consulting Maurice Woodruff.

Of the other clairvoyants mentioned earlier in this book, two have made newspaper headlines while subsequent chapters were being written. Peter Hurkos has been called in on a mysterious affair in the East—the disappearance of a man suspected to have been kidnapped. More unusually—Gerard Croiset has been approached as a consultant on the case of a disappearance that occurred here in the United States. Both cases are still under investigation as this is written.

Thus it is that in the witchcraft-conscious world of today, events reported in the daily newspapers focus the attention of the general public to an increasing extent on witches, clairvoyants, astrologers, in fact, on all who possess the gift and who apply it to the craft and, in this way, make the headlines.

With people such as Mrs. Sybil Leek urging that secrecy be, if not abolished, at least lessened, the reluctance of other witches to speak up and tell of their experiences will surely diminish. And then no doubt, it will come as a surprise to many members of the public, particularly those who are skeptically inclined, to see how many witchcraft practitioners there really are around the world in this day and age.

CHAPTER XVIII

Eyeing the Evil Eye

EYES have intangible qualities that have fascinated people for centuries. Love, hate, fear and delight—the whole gamut of emotions can be read in the expression of the eye. Moreover, this quality of being an emotion-mirror is not confined to the eyes of *homo sapiens* alone; there are many species among the lower animals whose eyes can also express feelings.

The eyes are, perhaps, the windows both to and of the inner spirit and as such are very possibly endowed with some special power of their own. Whatever the scientific facts, this seems to be the conclusion reached by people on every continent as the tribes and civilizations of the world developed.

In the East, for example, the eyes of an idol were frequently made out of precious jewels, denoting the tremendous power of the eye. The concept of an "all-seeing Eye" has turned up in both Eastern and Western beliefs; in some Eastern idols, the important eye was a third one, located in the middle of the idol's forehead and frequently denoted by a huge ruby.

Both good and evil have been ascribed to the power of the eye and there is no doubt that hypnotism has had much to do with the reputation of this particular power. Not that it was always identified or designated directly as hypnotism: a witch doctor was said to have had a strange power over members of the tribe. Or a witch was described as having had terrible, glittering eyes that "compelled" or any one of a number of descriptions that nowadays immediately suggest a hypnotic power of one

degree or another. Examples of this are also found in the animal world. There are snakes which render their prey immobile by weaving back and forth in front of it.

The mystique of the power of the eyes has always been a universal one. And—people being what they are—the belief in the "evil eye" has been one of the strongest beliefs among men. The maleficent use of the evil eye and protection against it have been the subjects of myth, rumor, study and investigation just about everywhere.

I have come across this fear of the evil eye in several parts of the world. In Quito, Ecuador, for example, the Andean Indians will turn away from any tourist aiming a camera at them. The lens of the camera is, as far as the Indians are concerned, an eye; they know it will make an image of them. And they believe that the camera eye, by making this image, is permanently capturing the portion of their soul that is showing through their own eyes. Hence their abrupt back-turning the moment they see a camera raised in their direction. The soul cannot escape through the solid wall of their backs, and so in this way they feel protected. (Some photography enthusiasts have gotten around this by facing their subjects at a 90-degree angle and holding the camera sideways. This is easiest with the sort of machine that has a viewing mirror or lens which you look down at.)

Cross the South Atlantic—and you will find the same reaction to cameras among a great many tribes in Africa. Here, the cult of the evil eye is a many-faceted thing, ranging from the casting of a temporary curse to what is, in essence, a death sentence.

The casting of a "death look" is a serious and involved matter in Africa, its actual ceremonial format and pattern varying from region to region. In some places, a witch doctor can be hired to cast such a spell on an enemy. In these cases a fee will pass from the person desiring the other's death to the witch doctor.

Or it may be the witch doctor himself who, at serious odds with someone in his village or practicing area, casts the evil eye at a victim of his own. Such a victim is usually

a challenger to the witch doctor's position in one way or another. He may even be another witch doctor who has violated the initiating witch doctor's personal or professional sphere. In such a case, it is almost certain that the victimized witch doctor will reciprocate—and evil-eye spells will flash both ways through the air. The outcome will depend solely upon whose magic is stronger.

For make no mistake about this—the African killer version of the evil eye *does* work. The secret of its success is simple: the superstitious victim always knows the death eye has been cast upon him.

The witch doctor doing the casting makes very sure his victim hears about it. Either there is a ceremony and he is picked out directly, or the witch doctor tells him. "Telling" in this instance covers any form of communication, whether verbal or by means of a painted sign on the victim's hut or the laying of a death *juju* at his feet or at the entrance to his hut.

Once the victim knows he has been condemned to death by the evil eye, a combination of fanatical belief plus auto-suggestion begins to work to make the spell come true.

"They just fade away," missionaries in Africa have reported time and again. "Once they know the spell is on them, they seem to give up, physically and spiritually. Their acceptance of the witch doctor's magic is so complete that they don't even try to fight against it."

To undermine the absolute power and influence of a local witch doctor, one group of missionaries in the Congo worked very hard to save intended victims of the evil eye from death.

"Eventually, we did manage to reach one of the boys," says one of the members of the mission. "We persuaded him our magic was stronger than that of the witch doctor. That was not too hard to do because the boy had been starving himself to death, and some intravenous feeding impressed him greatly."

But the plan backfired. The witch doctor, on hearing that his victim was not only still alive but looking fit and

healthy, and working at the mission, went into action himself. He called a conference of the elders of the villages under his influence, explaining to them the very evil magic that was going on. His death spell had worked, he said, but the mission magic had "placed another spirit" inside the dead body of his victim. They must all beware of the living-dead creature with the transplanted spirit.

"Word of this got back to the boy, of course. We know the witch doctor intended it to. And the inevitable happened: our logic receded and a lifetime of superstition and belief took over again. The boy left the mission, went off to another village and died shortly thereafter, because to live 'with another spirit' inside, instead of his own, was too terrible to bear."

Cases such as this prove, time and again and with terrible emphasis, the power of the belief in the killer evil eye in Africa. It therefore came as a great surprise to many old Africa hands—especially anyone who had spent any time at all in the Congo regions—that the rebel forces who fought in the Stanleyville area in the early 1960's seemed to have no fear at all of the evil eye.

Contrary to all previous behavior, they almost seemed to welcome reporters with cameras, and grinned happily while posing for photograph after photograph. These photos were taken during the grisly public executions staged by the rebels. That the rebels should stage special executions just for the benefit of the newsmen was not so surprising. The incredible savagery of the Congo warfare made pointless massacre a commonplace.

But the willingness of the rebels to pose *en masse*, or alone, or with their various weapons, including blow darts, or displaying some of their talismans against the enemy—this was indeed a surprise. Later, however, a plausible explanation was put forth. The local witch doctors had issued special *jujus* to the rebels that "held their spirits" safely within their bodies, rendering them—but not their victims—immune to the spirit-snatching of the white man's cameras.

The camera lens is not the only object of suspicion

among people who fear their souls can be stolen through the power of an evil eye. Mirrors are also objects to be feared under some conditions. Nor is this belief confined to the more primitive societies. European countries abound with myths and superstitions that involve mirrors. In some, it is said that a witch, having no soul, casts no image in a looking-glass. In others, the mirror itself can be used to "suck the soul away" from the human frame. Woven in and out of all these stories seems to be a universal condemnation of the sin of vanity, of admiring one's own image in a mirror but, as in so many cases, myth, method and social mores are so intricately twisted together that it is well-nigh impossible to separate the individual strands.

Stories invented centuries apart and still told today are interwoven with the background of the power of eyes and its attendant beliefs. From ancient times, we have the story of Narcissus, who was punished for spending all his days staring at his reflected image. Coming down to more modern times, we have the Venetian sequence of Offenbach's opera, *Tales of Hoffman,* in which Hoffman realizes he has been outsmarted by the wicked Dapertutto when he looks in a mirror while dressing—and finds no reflection of himself in it.

These stories are in themselves reflections—reflections of the legends passed on from generation to generation. In the United States, this particular set of beliefs has been preserved in the widespread notion that breaking a mirror is unlucky. To break a mirror is to shatter a reflection. The shattering of a reflection is the destruction of a person's image, which in turn has captured or sucked in that person's essence—his soul.

The talismans used in Europe to ward off the evil eye are most frequently horn-shaped objects. This follows the fight-fire-with-fire principle. The evil eye is the devil's tool, so, if you use the image of the devil's horns against it, no harm can befall you. Curly twists of red coral, looking like a single curved horn, are widely sold all over the Continent, and the goldsmiths of Florence have for

years fashioned holders out of the gold in which such pieces of coral can be fixed. The protective charm can then be slipped onto a chain and worn around the neck.

In the south of Italy, belief in the evil eye—the *mal'occhio*—is so all-encompassing as to be almost a way of life. Not only do human beings wear charms against its power, they also adorn their homes with strong charms against the evil. Bulls' horns will be attached to the top of a roof, or a primitive hex sign with horns will be painted on a wall to insure protection both for the building and its inhabitants.

One of the non-horn charms against the evil eye is a cerulean blue bead, sometimes worn singly, sometimes strung together with other beads. This is worn like a bracelet or necklace in Italy and also in Greece.

And then there are the masks sold in any village market south of Rome and a great many north of Rome, too. These, like most of the charms are horned, for they frequently depict the devil's face. He is usually sticking out his tongue. This gesture, linked to phallic symbolism, is also insurance against the *mal'occhio*. In fact, should a native of Calabria be caught without his protective anti-evil-eye charm, he might well stick out his tongue if he finds himself in danger of having a *mal'occhio* cast upon him.

In northern countries of the Continent, and particularly Middle Europe (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania), the horn sign made with the fingers (point the index and the little finger, fold the rest into the palm) is an old defense against the evil eye.

A fetish very much like the Brazilian *figa*—a little carved hand, with the thumb protruding between the index and third finger—is another of the many European charms used in this connection. Going back to the horned image, we get the lucky horseshoe which is considered a propitious symbol in the United States. Originally, the horseshoe prongs were symbolic of the devil's horn and—yes, once again—strong protection against the evil eye.

Incidentally, the phrase "to give (someone) a dirty look" was originally linked to the evil eye.

In Mexico, we find the evil eye belief as firmly entrenched as anywhere in the Old World, and children are believed to be far more prone to succomb to the power than adults. A seed called a Deer's Eye can be used to protect the child against the evil influence, however.

But if the evil eye prevails, it causes a sickness called *espanto* (fright) which may possibly be a form of hysteria. To cure this, the local *curandera* must first find out whether a man or a woman cast the spell. She will take an egg and break it into a glass receptacle. Then she will look carefully at the egg yolk. If a long mark appears in it, the spell-maker is identified as a man. However, if it was a woman who cast her evil eye upon the unfortunate child, the yolk mark will be round or at least a fat oval.

Then comes the cure. It is, in its way, another form of the *limpia,* a cleansing. The child must first change all his clothes. Then, if the spell was cast by a man, he must be wiped all over with a shirt. If the spell-maker was a woman, the cloth employed for the wiping must be an apron.

So far, I have discussed only the harmful aspects of eye power, as exemplified by the evil eye. Yet the eye can also be used in a positive manner. Goodness and strength of purpose and character can be discerned in the eyes of certain people. And the eye itself can have a positive power.

Once upon a time, men and women who possessed this positive power were said to practice or exercise the art of fascination. Thus a beautiful woman—or perhaps merely a woman with striking eyes—was said to ensnare her admirers by the art of fascination. By this was meant the bewitching power of her glance. The English language still retains phrases that were formed in the days when the belief was universal. Someone who is "making eyes at" someone else can credit the phrase to history. Also, the usage of "to cast one's eyes upon" in the sense of "to

covet," is a hangover from the belief in the art of fascination.

I have been writing about the art of fascination in the past tense, but is it not still in existence today?

Let me relate the story of a girl I have known since she was a teen-ager. There was always an aura of magic about her (I remember hearing that very word used to describe her many times); she was a special person. It was predicted that this girl would unquestionably go places. She did go places. Sometimes against great odds and with great courage, she overcame the negative aspects in her life and rose to her present career and fame by means of her inner fortitude and talent and fantastic charm—all of which shone forth, of course, from her very beautiful eyes.

The people she has encountered along the way have often commented upon her "compelling charm" and called her "a fascinating person." The word "bewitching" has also been applied to her more than once. In recent years, a famous photographer called her "one of the world's most beautiful women."

But being brave and beautiful and brilliant did not alone make this young woman world-famous. In fact, the event which changed the course of her whole life and shaped her future was highlighted by her compelling eyes. For one day this girl looked into a restaurant mirror and there her fabulous eyes met those of a stranger—and history of a kind was made.

The people who predicted all along that Noel (her real name and not the one under which she is famous) would achieve phenomenal success, almost certainly did so on account of her fascinating beauty, especially as manifested in the bewitching gaze of her eyes. But there is another clue to this girl's special power—her name is Noel because she was born on December 24th, the birth date so significant in witchcraft lore. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

Magic and Medicine

THERE IS a saying in certain circles that today's witchcraft is tomorrow's science. Another way of putting it would be that today's spell is tomorrow's prescription—and there is much basis for this attitude.

It is probably quite easy for the layman to see how this would work in connection with all the herbal knowledge accumulated through the years and handed down from generation to generation as part of the lore of witchcraft. So much of our medicine comes from plants and plant derivatives (or did, before the recent discovery of synthetic drugs) that it is easy to see the two schools, that of magic and that of medicine, pursuing parallel paths, possibly in unequal spurts of progress but nonetheless, parallel. Both were aiming for the control of the functioning of the human body and its various parts, including the mind. How this control was used—whether for good or for harmful purposes—is another matter.

One theorist holds that the difference between the doctor and the witch in many cases was in the amount of medicament each used. A doctor, he maintains, would use a dose that was sufficient only to cure the disease. A witch would use the same medicament but in large—and therefore harmful, sometimes even lethal—quantities. As an example, he cites plant extracts that in small doses cause a woman's menses to flow easily but which, when consumed in larger doses, will cause a pregnant woman to abort. According to this school of thought, the old-time doctor used the small dose, a witch the large dose.

It was a neat theory—the notion of witchcraft as a kind

of applied "misapplication" of medicine, but like many neat theories it is not necessarily accurate. One needs to remember that the evil of the witches in past centuries lay mainly in the eyes and minds of the witch-hunters. One should also recall that in those days, a doctor—a "leech"—was neither a highly-trained technician nor a pillar of society. There were, it is true, sincere students of medicine and the human body among the early doctors. But such individuals also existed among the ranks of the witches, although their abilities were not officially acknowledged.

An English witch, for example, is credited with the discovery of the stimulant properties of the foxglove plant. Another name for foxglove is digitalis—the powerful cardiac stimulant. Or take the case of disinfectants, which simply did not exist hundreds of years ago. What they did have in those far-off days were "cleansers" or "purifiers" (many of which neither cleaned nor purified); these were all herbal in origin. Many of them were discovered by witches and had positive value, even if they were not exactly antiseptic in action.

Rosemary water, for example (recipe: steep two handfuls of rosemary leaves in approximately two quarts of water overnight, having poured the water over the leaves while it was boiling), when used as a final hair rinse, does impart an extra sheen and it certainly smells nice if one happens to like rosemary. Thus, while washing a bedridden patient with rosemary water may not have been of any medicinal value, it certainly made the patient smell better and, very probably, feel better. Furthermore, the incantations muttered over both the preparation of the rosemary water and the "anointing" or cleansing of the invalid may have been of psychological help, too.

I have already referred to the centuries-old Indian use of the root rauwolfia for the casting out of strange and/or evil spirits from the human body—the root that finally attracted the attention of the West and was used in the manufacture of tranquilizers. In this case, the link between witchcraft and science was also botanical lore.

But as time goes on and science searches further and further, we are discovering that botany is not the only connection that weaves magic and medicine together. A few examples, culled at random, are sufficient to prove the point.

Palmistry has long been related to witchcraft. Fortune-telling has, of course, been performed in many ways. But the layman has always felt that the lines of his palm, so different in each human being, were likely to be much more meaningul than, say, the chance formation of tea leaves in the bottom of an empty teacup. Nonetheless, palmistry has been condemned in some places, outlawed in many others, denounced by numerous authorities and scoffed at by even more. Doctors were certainly not given to glancing at a patient's palm lines when giving a physical examination.

Recently, however, the medical world has become extremely interested in palm lines. And, in the United States, the palm prints of several hundred newborn babies have been filed. These will be checked, through the years, in conjunction with the medical history of the growing children.

More recently still, there was some evidence that certain physical defects and deficiencies present in a child from birth are linked with the marking of one of the palm lines. If one palm line can already be used to detect and diagnose a physical defect at birth, it is likely that scientific reading of the palm has enormous possibilities. Full-time research is being conducted on the newly discovered technique.

Now let us turn to something even more surprising: the scientific verification of a legend that even believers in witchcraft have often had difficulty swallowing.

It concerns werewolves—those frightening creatures of the night so beloved by weavers of ghost and terror stories and the Hollywood horror-movie makers. A werewolf is a shaggy, wild being, half-man, half-monster, who roams about only after dark. Werewolves were very much crea-

tures of the Dark Ages and Central Europe, and belief in them has faded away in the last two hundred years.

Dr. Leon Illis, a staff physician at a prominent London hospital, intrigued by the frequent mention of them in old literature, maintains that they possibly did exist—and still do today. Dr. Illis was the author of an article on the subject published by the Royal Society of Medicine. In the article he suggests that werewolves may well have been men who suffered from porphyria, a rare blood and skin disease. The manifestations of porphyria are frightening and extremely unpleasant. The sufferer has reddish-brown teeth, lesions on the face and hands and an exceptional sensitivity to light.

This pathological state, which is genetic in origin, can also be observed in some of the lower animals, but only a human victim of the rare disease would fit the physical description of a werewolf.

"Such a person, because of photosensitivity and the resultant disfigurement, may choose only to wander about at night," was one of the points advanced by Dr. Illis. He went on to say that the porphyria victim of old might also have shown a certain degree of abnormal behavior.

"In ancient times, this would be accentuated by the physical and social treatment he received from the other villagers, whose instincts would be to explain his appearance in terms of witchcraft or satanic possession," the doctor concluded.

Another sign of the gradual strengthening of the ties between science and magic is the recent scientific acceptance of the use of medicine men and witch doctors in treating mental patients in various countries, many of them in Africa.

The suggestion came from Alexander H. Leighton, a Cornell University professor. Speaking in Switzerland at the Geneva Development Conference in 1963, Professor Leighton told of the excellent results that had been obtained in a mental-health project undertaken in Nigeria. Both medical doctors and witch doctors had worked together on the project.

In describing the methods that had been used, the professor said the tribal medicine men had "played a conspicuous part in the psychotherapeutic management of some patients."

The project blended primitive tribal ceremonies and witchcraft rites with modern medical knowledge. Interestingly enough, some of the psychiatric techniques were found to be similar to those used in traditional rituals. This bolstered the findings of previous studies, correlating the effects of modern shock therapy with the witch doctor's "cleansing by fright."

"Professor Leighton went on to suggest the establishment of modern psychiatric services in rural health centers being set up in underdeveloped countries, with the native healers of the area—whatever their local titles—working in conjunction with these services. Personality disorders—the most commonly found mental illnesses in primitive agricultural societies—would be the main target. The medicine men would work under the supervision of medically trained doctors.

Another magic-to-medicine link was made several years ago when a French doctor heard of a Mexican *curandera* who was said to be able to tell whether a newborn infant would live or not by tasting the child. This was not as cannibalistic as it sounds. She did not bite a hunk out of the infant, but merely licked its skin.

Intrigued by the high degree of accuracy of her predictions, the doctor arranged for certain questions to be asked of the Mexican witch. She was, it appeared, long experienced in the practice of midwifery, having specialized in the field from the beginning of her long career in *curandería.*

When questioned about the tasting test, the *curandera* replied yes, indeed, she had used it for many years. It was very simple.

"When a child tastes very salty, he dies. If he tastes of nothing at all, he will live," she explained.

Much subsequent study of various different types of killer diseases or defects of newborn infants has gone into

the forming of the present-day opinion of the taste test. It has been found that during the course of some of these diseases, including a form of intestinal occlusion and respiratory failure, the body's perspiration becomes highly salty—thereby giving credence to the *curandera's* test.

Unfortunately, the diagnostic interpretation of the salinity content is a difficult and complex matter. But scientific research continues; a witch's method of diagnosis may someday be clinically perfected and thus serve as an important first step in attacking the diseases themselves.

There are also witchcraft practices which, although they interest the student of magic, can hardly be considered to have achieved any satisfactory medical results. Even from a psychologocial point of view, there appears to be little value in the old incantations which were supposed to cure various physical ills, since these chants were unaccompanied by any form of herbal or other treatment.

However, for the record, it is believed in southern Italy that the following incantation will cure a child of worms:

Holy Monday
Holy Tuesday
Holy Wednesday
Maundy Thursday
Good Friday
Holy Saturday
Easter Sunday
Worms-on-the-run-day.

The incantation is then repeated backwards. After this, the entire incantatation is repeated twice more, forwards and then backwards, over the child. Theoretically, the worms thus "exorcised" would die, leaving the child cured.

A little less bizarre is the peasant belief in southern Italy that the skin disease, erysipelas, can be cured by the application of silver to the afflicted area. Old silver coins are most frequently used in this cure. It has not been proved by medical science that there is any sound basis for the belief in the curative properties of silver in a case of erysipelas—yet.

But the worlds of magic and medicine may well meet again in an area that is currently a hotbed of controversy; the hallucinatory drugs. It is unfortunate that hysteria, insufficient knowledge and a haphazard (as yet) form of testing have left the whole question of these drugs, including LSD, in a gigantic and chaotic mass of confusion.

No one, at the time of this writing, seems to have any definite answers. Vague or unscientific or philosophic answers are a dime a dozen; so are the irate protests of a sheep-minded public. But of actual, solid fact there seems to be little. Such opinions as are available at the moment, all appear to be strongly prejudiced, which makes them unsuitable for impartial judgment.

At this time, then, one can at best opine that:

1. The drugs cause extraordinary sensations.

2. One can presume them to be dangerous, insofar as some users have made foolish or irrational moves while under influence of these drugs, and such moves have caused them severe bodily harm.

3. The *apparent* popularity of the drugs would seem to indicate that the sensations caused by them are, in the main, highly pleasurable.

But even this last point is suspect; I say *apparent* popularity for good reason. There are no precise facts and figures available. It is mostly a question of "They say . . ." or "Rumors indicate . . ." Hallucinatory drug-takers who will step forward and be counted seem to be rare. They do tend to defend such drugs as LSD, however, speaking of its "mind-stretching" properties, its tendency to increase one's "awareness" and the feeling of "superconsciousness" that it induces. The phrase "cosmic consciousness" has also been used in describing the effects of LSD.

Tuning in on the cosmic consciousness begins to edge close to the heart of witchcraft. For here, too, we have a cosmic force, a power—*the* power—and those who are witches can, or say they can, tune in on this force or power.

What is more, the use of hallucinatory drugs has been a part of witchcraft in many different parts of the world for

a great many years. The Egyptians are believed to have used such drugs for their initiation rituals; there is nothing new in the plant extracts and derivatives that have been used to produce such drugs. Certain kinds of mushroom, the cactus mescala, many of the natural poisons taken in small doses and other leaf, stalk or flower parts can be used to this purpose.

But—and it is a big but—there is a difference between the ritual taking of a cosmic drug at the witchcraft ceremony and the casual tripping out of most of today's experimenters. Part of the difference lies in the area of mental preparation.

An LSD-user who panics when a trip starts going badly may well end up in serious trouble. A mentally controlled and trained African witch doctor, on the other hand, has been carefully schooled in the use of a particular drug by his predecessor. And his predecessor is an expert, well-versed in the use and application of the drug and its effects. Tradition also warns the witch doctor of the dangers and possible side effects of the drug.

The validity of this approach has already been noted by some "acidheads" who advise newcomers to the LSD fold to have an experienced trip-taker with them when they use the drug for the first time. Thus, Western drug-takers in the twentieth century, seeking new sensations and experiences, are reverting to the centuries-old practices of jungle witch doctors.

Also, the beginning of rituals seem to be springing up around the taking of the acid. It is no longer a casual, solitary act, but is acquiring more and more a social significance. Perhaps the world of synthesized drugs is turning back to the beginnings of time and reawakening atavistic desires in the human mind.

No doubt the next few years will see great progress in the research into the various uses and effects of hallucinatory drugs. One of the points already raised by advocates of the hallucinogens is that, unlike alcohol or heroin, drugs such as LSD are not habit-forming. They can be taken, enjoyed—and then left alone.

Yes? Well, maybe.

All that has been said is that they do not produce an *organic* craving in the human body. It remains to be seen whether they produce a *psychic* craving instead.

The practice of witchcraft entails great discipline of mind. Modern drug-takers need to develop a similar discipline if they are to learn to control the effects of their drugs, instead of having the drugs control them.

If the power—the power inherent in witchcraft belief—is accepted as existing, then it must also be accepted that a great many people have managed to tune in on it by sheer concentrated mental force—unaided mental tuning, as it were. And there is no doubt that *all* power—whether mental or sexual or physical or whatever—is at its finest and most potent when it is at its most pure.

The mind that is goaded into work by drugs can and does function. But its functioning would be of an even higher order were it to goad itself by self-impetus alone. The man who whets his sexual appetite into action by drugs can, no doubt, perform the sexual act. But had he been able to achieve that performance unaided by artificial stimulation, it would have been a far more meaningful act.

Speculation on the subject of drugs can be endless. In time to come, interesting conclusions about the use of the hallucinatory drugs may emerge from scientifically controlled experiments. But it may be many years before any definite knowledge is acquired. Well, witchcraft has taken thousands of years to develop to its present state. Medical science cannot be expected to close the gap within a mere decade or two.

CHAPTER XX

Charms, Chants and Preventive Maintenance

A LARGE proportion of witchcraft superstition has always dealt with what the modern, mechanized world puts under the heading of "preventative maintenance." As the phrase suggests, this is protection from dangers that have not, as yet, arisen. One might also refer to it as a form of insurance. There must be a deep human need for protection against what *may* happen—a fear of disasters that are at best, unlikely, but whose menace, however remote, makes the average mortal uneasy.

Even the witch-hunters, in their Middle Ages heyday, were known to seek out spells and incantations to ward off the evil they felt might befall them. Since their tactics made them especially vulnerable to the wrath of witches, the hunters were obviously more in need than most of adequate charms and protection against malevolent and revengeful spells.

The charms serving to protect one against magic malevolence were, on the whole, ordinary, everyday things. They were either man-made objects of a mundane order, or plants which were readily available to the nervous and the fearful.

As a starting point, let us look at a widely known and edible plant, garlic. As many people will acknowledge, garlic is guaranteed to keep any number of people at bay should one eat a certain amount of it and then exhale rather heavily. Perhaps its strong, unpleasant smell—which was enough to repel anyone—gave rise to the legend that garlic offered protection against witches. There

was no need, however, to eat the garlic in order to enjoy its magical power. Some garlic hung in a corner of a room or loose garlic cloves lying on a table were all that the superstitious considered necessary.

In some parts of Europe, notably France, Italy, Hungary and Rumania, garlic wreaths were woven and worn as necklaces. Protective necklaces were worn at times when there was a witchcraft scare and evil was believed to be especially rampant. During normal times, people relied on the hanging up of the redolent plant to keep harm at bay.

Nor was the power of garlic confined to keeping witches away. It also had the reputation of saving the innocent from the ravages of vampires.

Although I have referred to these beliefs in the past tense, they are still very much in evidence today. Vampires, it is true, have taken a back seat, and people seeking protection against them are few and rather out of touch with the rest of the world. But protection against witches still flourishes everywhere; garlic as a talisman is highly favored in Central and South America.

Bells are another means of protection against witches. The reasoning behind this is easier to follow if one remembers the old accusation that witchcraft was actively anti-Christian. (It is not anti-Christian, neither as it is practiced today nor as much of it was practiced in past centuries. Satanism is a different matter—and it should not be confused with witchcraft. Especially since satanism is anti-witchcraft, too).

In any event, a witch is supposedly rendered helpless whenever a bell is rung, particularly a bell hanging in a church belfry. But in a pinch, any bell will do. It must, however, be a bell that rings, not a modern electric bell that buzzes or chimes. It is the purity of the bell's note that paralyzes the actions of the witch. In the past, a cracked bell was taken as a sign that a witch had been in the neighborhood and was trying to destroy all the devices that could be used to countermand her spells.

Also of church-inspired origin are the protective powers

of wax, candles, blessed water or blessed oil. The first two items, however, could be accused of playing a double game, since wax is also used in witchcraft to make wax dolls and images, while both white and colored candles are used at some of the witchcraft rites.

The protective powers of the horseshoe come from quite another source. In England, the handling of the lucky horseshoe has been reduced to a fine art. You must not hang the horseshoe upside down, or all the luck will run out. Preferably it is hung, prongs facing upward, over a doorway, where it insures happiness for the household.

One wonders how horseshoe believers would feel if they knew—and most of them do not—that the shoe symbolizes the devil—head and horns—and is basically a witch-dispeller, designed to hold the witch and her magic spells at bay.

In addition to the use of charms such as garlic, bells and horseshoes, there are a number of precautions that can be taken to offset a witch's spell. One of these precautions involves the avoidance of elder trees.

In Europe, particularly in England, elders are considered just about the most witch-prone trees that grow, for they are believed to be the spiritual homes of witches. Witchcraft practitioners of the days of yore always grew one in their gardens. Therefore, a non-witch would not dream of having such a sinister tree near the house, and if possible, not even in the furthest corner of the garden.

A child's bed should never be made from elder-tree wood, nor should elder branches ever be burned in a fire in the home. Any such mistakes are liable to provoke a witch's anger and release evil spells.

There are times, however, when an elder tree must, for some reason or other, be cut down. This could mean disaster, for it must necessarily anger the witch whose spiritual home is being violated. (This belief, incidentally, is a hangover from the days when people believed a witch could turn herself into a tree and that she was given to dwelling in her elder tree from time to time even when she

was in human form.) To avoid possible disaster, the formula is straightforward: whoever is going to cut down the tree—or, for that matter, lop off any part of it—must first apologize to the witch of the tree and promise that, "when I am a tree, you can have some of my wood in return."

This would appear to be a belief that has been handed down through the centuries from the Druids, who were steeped in tree-lore and tree-wraith beliefs. Should the cutter fail to apologize, the very least he will suffer is bodily injury while he cuts the tree.

Possibly one of the best all-around protective devices against the spells that may be sent one's way is another plant—any of the several varieties of angelica. Some say that wild angelica is the best of all, but opinions differ on the finer points. Anyway, the aromatic, edible and sometimes medicinally used angelica has also been called the "Holy Plant" and is what South Americans refer to as *un santo remedio* (a saintly remedy—saintly in the sense of infallible) against all forms of witchcraft.

The calendar also provides forewarning for the wary in regard to witchcraft. Extra precautions should no doubt be taken around dates that are witches' days. There are six principal dates; all of them are powerful, all believed to bring out the witches to their covens to celebrate special rites. They are Midsummer (also known as Beltrane); Midwinter (also known as Yule, and, it must be admitted, the feast from which the Christmas-connected term yule is taken); Halloween, much celebrated by children in the United States but ignored by non-witch populations elsewhere in the world; Rodmas (also known as Walpurgisnacht and as May Eve, since it is celebrated on the last day of April); Candlemas (celebrated on February 1); and Lammas (celebrated on August 1). The dates indicate that the witchcraft conscious section of the population has to watch its step roughly every second month, from sundown to dawn—or else have plenty of garlic handy for full preventative action.

The above-mentioned feast days are of European origin. A practitioner of magic in Thailand, for example,

would not be likely to observe such holidays. Treating the subject of important magical dates on a generalized, around-the-world basis, it is advisable to consider the phases of the moon. The full moon, particularly during the main harvesting season, is always likely to be a time for witchcraft rites, since these ceremonies tend to be associated more with the natural laws and events of the year than with the man-made calendar.

But at any time, there are certain unusual forms of well-wishing which are actually disguised incantations against witchcraft. What makes these forms of well-wishing unusual is that they deliberately sound unpleasant on the surface.

A good example is the German good-luck greeting *"Hals und Beinbruch!"* This cheerfully wishes the greeted person to break his neck and leg—an utter disaster, if taken literally.

But these words are used only to fool any witch who may be listening, so she will not realize that good luck is really being augered. If the intended good wishes were offered openly, she might become jealous of their recipient and, in a fit of witchly pique, cast a spell to change the good luck to bad.

Similarly, a mother's admonition to her child such as "Don't boast" or "Stop showing off" is—apart from basic training in good manners—a nod to the ancient superstition that one should not provoke a witch to envy one's good fortune by boasting of it.

In Spanish-speaking countries, children chant a verse when it rains that also has its origin in witchcraft-protection. As the drops start falling, they recite:

"Que llueva, que llueva
La vieja esta en la cueva
Los pajaritos cantan
Y la luna se levanta."

(Let it rain, let it rain/The old woman is in the lair/The little birds sing/And the moon rises.)

The first line is in the same reverse-logic form as the disaster-phrased good wishes of the German greeting, letting the rainmaking witch know that the singer does not care that she made it rain. The second line, speaking of the old woman, is a slight on the witch's powers. After all, if, as mentioned in the third line, the little birds sing, who can be afraid of the big bad witch?

The fourth line, referring to the rising of the moon, is most probably borrowed from another, now lost or forgotten, verse or incantation to Diana, the moon goddess and the direct object of all Dianic cults.

Apart from verbal charms and incantations, there are many everyday gestures and actions whose origins can be traced to witchcraft protection, though we accept these gestures as a matter of course without suspecting their original meaning.

Take, for example, someone who accidentally spills salt. This person will, as likely as not, promptly throw an additional pinch of salt over his left shoulder. This action was originally intended to appease the evil spirits who were invoked by the salt that was spilled in the first place. But with most people nowadays, the over-the-shoulder gesture is an instinctive reaction rather than a considered move.

Again—touching wood. The habit of touching wood in order to ward off an evil spirit—touching wood for luck—is such an ingrained habit in many people that they hardly realize they're doing it. And even if they do realize it, they are unlikely to know that they are carrying on one of the old anti-witch traditions, with its origins far back in primitive witchcraft belief.

Sneezing is another everyday occurrence that calls for special treatment in witchcraft lore—treatment that is still accorded today. The old theory had it that a person who sneezed was peculiarly vulnerable to evil spirits who might be able to enter his body via the path cleared by the sneeze. Therefore, such a person needed immediate protection:

"God bless you!"
"Santé!"
"Salute!"
"Gesundheit!"

The old charm translates into almost every language. Either the name and blessing of God are invoked, or the sneezer is wished good health in order to counteract the ill effect of any lurking evil spirits.

Naturally, such protective beliefs and preventative charms vary from continent to continent, from one witchcraft cult to another. But there seems to be one universal, sure-fire method of insuring oneself against witchcraft, no matter what the country, creed or continent.

And that is to hire a witch for oneself.

Personalized witchery, the only guaranteed preventative against spells and evil spirits, is the very best protective measure of them all.

CHAPTER XXI

Hexing at Home

IF YOU have read this far, it is safe to assume that you have a deeper interest in witchcraft than the casual observer. Perhaps an active interest in the application of the craft may also be present. Hence this chapter, which is offered as a general guideline to those who may wish to pursue the subject further.

Of course, yet another possibility exists: you may *be* a witch. I shall therefore begin with that as a starting point.

How does one know whether or not one is a witch? Here I must refer back to the two schools of thought. One says a witch is born, the other maintains the craft can be acquired. Most members of the first school also claim that if you are born a witch, you automatically know you are one. No further explanation; you just *know*.

Occasionally, however, a dissenting voice is heard on this matter. One English witch, who is the leader of a London coven but who shies away from any form of publicity, says she had no idea she was a witch until she met someone who, quite casually in the middle of a conversation, said, "Of course, you know you're a witch, don't you?"

Somewhat flustered by the suddenness of the strange thought, she replied that no, indeed, she knew nothing of the sort.

"Well, you are," came the matter-of-fact rejoinder. "And when you think back over your life, you'll realize it."

This curious exchange quite naturally aroused the dis-

covered witch's curiosity, and she says that, true enough, as she started investigating the matter of witchcraft, incidents in her past life proved to her, slowly but surely, that ever since her early childhood she had indeed been tuned in. She simply had not recognized the fact and thus she had ignored the manifestations, such as extremely clear hunches and intuitive conclusions.

Her interest reawakened her talents and then, as so often happens if one tries too hard, seemed to "frighten everything away," to use her own words.

"I thought I'd lost it all, by reading and studying up on witchcraft. Perhaps I attempted too much too quickly. Anyway, I had the feeling the gift was gone forever."

This proved to be only a temporary setback. Soon her innate talent and her acquired knowledge supported each other and, as I already mentioned, she now leads a coven in London.

To get back to the point—a born witch usually knows it, but there can be exceptions. So, if you suspect you may be a witch but you aren't sure, what should you do?

Well, you might start checking yourself for the many witch signs mentioned earlier, although they are by no means infallible. But no matter how you slice it, the born witch ultimately does come to *know*. That the gift may not be recognized for some years is possible, but sooner or later it will out. This knowledge of the gift, when it comes, is one of total belief.

Basically, a born witch is a witch primarily to himself or herself. The rest of the world, and what it sees or believes, is a secondary matter. To recognize you have the gift, can frequently be a weighty matter. It is not necessarily as pleasant or trouble-free as the outsider might like to think.

The following quotes from people who possess the gift—all of whom choose to remain anonymous—give the insider's point of view.

"You lose power by discussing the craft with outsiders. That's why I dislike publicity and always refuse to give my name."

"Having the power isn't always pleasant. With the clairvoyance, you know when sômeone's going to die or suffer some terrible experience. The responsibility of deciding whether or not to tell them can be very hard indeed."

"So often, you can sense people's thoughts, even the ones they don't fully realize they're thinking and it makes me feel as though I'm looking at something nobody should be allowed to see."

"Sometimes, when the power is very strong, I feel dreadfully sick. Then I know I'm going to see very clearly (into the future) even though I may not want to look. I wish I didn't see like that. At times, I wish I didn't have the gift at all."

So much, then, for the born-witch school of thought. Now, to the second school, which maintains the craft can be acquired. Simply studying up on witchcraft is not enough, the members of this school insist. The rites and lore must be learned under the capable guidance of those already inside the craft; the potential witch must join a coven.

I cannot say that I agree, unless they are confining their definition of the craft to that of Dianic worship. It is true, however, that mere study will not necessarily enable a person to tune in on the power. Or, let me put it this way: there is no *guarantee* that study alone will make one a witch. The basic talent—however dormant—must be there in the first place.

And if it is—if that basic talent is within you—you will find that it will come to the fore much more readily once you try to give it full rein.

Take hunches, for example. You cannot force them to happen; what you need to learn is how to recognize them, how to listen for them, as it were. No one can set the ground rules for this. People who have hunches have identified them in their own individual ways. Hunches are a manifestation of the power at work—or of a tuning in on the power.

At this point, someone might say, "Why, that's nothing

but straight ESP! So what's all this talk about witchcraft?"

And to that someone I should like to point out that there is no such thing as *straight* extra sensory perception. Some people gifted with it see while others seem to hear. Still others feel their messages, and then there are those who sense three-dimensionally. And, call it what you will, it still involves getting messages from Point A to Point B. It requires some kind of power—and so we again arrive at *the* power.

Unless you are long practiced in the art of using your hunches advantageously, beware the strong and indelible hunch. It can turn out to be nothing more than stubborn opinion. The fleeting, barely glimpsed hunches are those that need attention, the kind that flit swiftly through a thought and disappear, only to be glimpsed again later, equally briefly. Such messages have been likened to the split-second pricking of a pin, so quick and so light are they, you hardly sensed them. But the message did come—and then it comes again. That kind of hunch bears cataloguing.

Some premonitions are so strong they almost overwhelm the receiver. Often the foreshadows of disaster, they can cause real physical discomfort. But they are usually felt by people who are long practiced in the art, people who have learned to both recognize and live with their hunches.

Then there is the matter of fortune-telling. This is a field in which both the born and the student witch can test their capabilities. There are a great many different ways to look into people's futures and tell fortunes. Many books explain the various techniques.

Some of them are step by step—or perhaps I should say line by line—instructions on the art of palmistry, surely one of the most fascinating of methods. Others deal with the multiple forms of fortune-telling by ordinary playing cards. Apart from these, there are also the tarot cards, sometimes referred to as gypsy cards. There must be potential libraries full of volumes on astrology and the art

of casting horoscopes. This takes a great deal of study, since it is an intricate and complex affair but, to the interested student, nonetheless rewarding.

Actually, everyone can potentially practice witchcraft—to a certain extent. Let me explain this by anology. Given normal circumstances and normally developed senses, anyone can learn to play the piano to one degree or another. It is merely a question of how much time it will take for each individual to master the rudiments. It is true that the player may never get much further than playing "The Bluebells of Scotland" or a simplified version of the "Moonlight Sonata" with dogged and uninspired determination, but play them through from beginning to end he or she will be able to do.

Such a performance does not make a concert pianist—any more than learning the rudiments of witchcraft will make an inspired seer or witch. But the more talent that lies within the student's nature, the higher the level of involvement possible and the greater the achievement possibilities.

There is no doubt that, the more proficient you become in the craft, the more concentration becomes both necessary and possible. Such concentration can be both physically and emotionally exhausting, which is why it should be attained stage by stage. Total concentration is an extremely difficult goal, but it is necessary to acquire at least partial concentration if such things as thought-transferrence are to be attempted. *Willing* something to happen takes vast amounts of energy, all funneled and directed via concentration.

An image-exercise that helps in this field is the dot-in-a-circle image, long an Oriental method of exercising the power of concentrated thought.

Imagine a white blank. Then imagine a black line making a circle in the middle of that white blank. Next picture a black dot in the center of the circle and try to think of *nothing but that dot.*

It is not quite as easy as it sounds, but it does help to

train direction and control of thought processes. Even a few seconds of total concentration on that dot—and a few seconds is as much as you are likely to achieve—even that short span of time is, in effect, a power line.

To return to somewhat simpler things, you can always try out Adela's broom trick, mentioned in the chapter on South America, and test your present powers of concentration. For it was not the broom, *per se,* which removed the unwanted guest; it was Adela's concentrated will and total belief that activated the spell.

It is also the strength of belief that has made witchcraft wart cures highly effective for many generations. Nowadays, medical science maintains that many types of warts are of psychosomatic origin and, although final proof is yet to be established, this may well be so. In any event, it has long been known that wart cures have a high percentage of success.

They range from the old favorites used in the American South to the fire-focused methods of northern Europe. A stick is burned at one end in an open fireplace; its charred tip withdrawn and cooled. The black soot must be cold (preferably chilled by being placed in snow) when it is laid upon the warts. Only the other end of the stick can be held; the charred tip must touch only the warts it is to cure.

Then the whole stick is thrown into the fire. Its disintegration by flame symbolizes the fate of the warts. They, too, must eventually disappear, since their "spirit stick" has served as an example for them to follow.

Down South, one of the most famous of all wart-removing spells is the one cast with a bean. First, you split a bean. Then you cut the wart. Some say blood should appear, some say it does not matter. Place half the bean on the wart (if you have drawn blood, the bean should absorb some). The other half of the bean must be burned to nothingness. Then, on a moonless night, take the remaining half-bean to a crossroads, making sure you arrive at the junction at midnight. There you bury the bean,

chanting: "Down bean, off wart, come no more to bother me."

The above method is sometimes referred to as the Missouri Special, and has been mentioned in literature more than once.

Away with warts, then, and on to an experiment which, although it will not cast any spells for you, will probably help you to understand that there are more forces at work in this world than you originally suspected.

Take a small compass (the direction-finding kind) and tie a string to it. Tie the other end of the string to the middle of a round pencil, leaving about six inches of string between the two objects. Place a photograph of someone below the pencil. Now, when you use this "divining pendulum," you prop your elbows on a flat surface and hold each end of the pencil. Keep your hands as steady as you possibly can.

You can "read" photographs of people this way. Since this is a basic diviner, you will not get complicated messages—just a positive or negative reaction. Positive is signaled by the pendulum moving up and down over the photograph. A negative reaction causes the pendulum to move sideways across the photograph.

Try it. It is an interesting experiment, albeit somewhat eerie. For although you might tend to think it is *your* reaction to the person in the photograph that is being registered, you will find this is not the case—particularly when you suspend your pendulum over the picture of someone you like, only to find a negative swing beginning to arc violently over it.

Following the obvious line of thought, one cannot help wondering whether a camera does indeed capture more than just a pictorial image.

Leaving the experimental to one side, I should like to touch briefly on the subject of ritual. Taking it at the very kernel of its reasons for being—and this applies to all types of witchcraft ritual, be it the variety used by European covens, or the masked frenetic dances of the African witch doctor or the ascetic practices of the Oriental mystic

—all ritual is exercise to develop mental control. This may be control of various different kinds, self-directed or outer-directed, but it is still basically the same thing at the roots.

This underlines once again the importance of concentration and the weeding out of all extraneous thought—no easy feat, as you will discover the moment you try it.

Having tried it, however, and having begun to understand the fundamentals, you will probably also want to try applying it. Thus, we come to the subject of *willing,* which can be described as witchcraft's *force de frappe,* its implementing arm.

An experiment to practice goes as follows: use the dot inside the circle technique, but instead of drawing it mentally on a blank, draw it (always mentally, of course) on somebody's neck. Next time you are in a bus, or a train, or in an audience, focus your attention on somebody in front of you and draw your mental diagram on his neck or back.

If your power to will is sufficiently developed, the person will eventually either rub the spot you have been concentrating on, or will actually turn around. It will not harm your subject in any way, but you can, when practiced enough, transfer sensation via concentration.

There are people who maintain they can not only will other people to do things but inanimate objects as well. They may use coin-flipping as an example and prove their power by making the coin land the way they have willed it to land. They are not always a hundred percent successful, but certainly they succeed more often than the normal law of averages would allow.

Self-willing, too, comes into this category. At the beginning of this book I mentioned Mary Quant, the world-famous designer who has willed herself to a fabulous career. All such powers of will seem related to the central power; certainly, they are more than human determination.

If men and women can use this kind of power to will

action in themselves, in others and even in inanimate objects, who knows what man will achieve if he ever masters the central power completely?

CHAPTER XXII

A Personal View

AS FAR BACK as I can remember, witchcraft has been present on the periphery of my life. I do not recall a time when I did not know about magic or the belief in magic. There were signs of it all along the way. Even when I reach way back into the memories of early childhood, the knowledge that witchcraft existed was already present.

This is not to say crones sat around the family kitchen, boiling up a witches' brew in the proverbial cauldron. But signs of the supranatural world usually lurked close to home.

At times, there were hints of it in the adults' conversations—stories eventually halted by such remarks as "Little pitchers have big ears" or "I don't think the child understands, but just in case . . ." The memories of such conversations before their interruption are abetted by vaguer, foggier memories. Had a ghost looked at me in my cradle when I was only a few months old? Or was that only wishful thinking on my childish part? My parents and I had stayed at an old and haunted house; that much was fact. The adults said so. I later found out that experts in the field also said—and still say—the mansion in question is haunted. But had the ghost looked at me? It was possible, because it was reputed to be a lady ghost, who always looked at children. (It was also unlikely, I found out in more recent years, because we had stayed in the "other" or unhaunted wing of the house.)

Some years later, and on another continent, I heard the legend of the calandria. A calandria is a South American mocking bird and, as long as it minds its own business, no

one pays much attention to it. But should a calandria follow you, or display unusual interest in somebody's house, it is taken as an infallible signal of impending disaster.

My grandfather's death of a sudden heart attack came only a few days after a calandria had tried desperately to get into my grandparents' house. The bird hammered on the closed windows and, when shooed away, returned within minutes to try entry once more.

As the years went by, I was impressed time and again by the accuracy of the hunches felt by a number of people I knew. I do not recall exactly when I first heard of the gift of clairvoyance, but I do remember, most vividly, my meeting with a man named Courtney Luck, whose gift for seeing had been proved time and again. As it is with almost all the best clairvoyants, Mr. Luck did not use his unusual talent for monetary gain. He was, as I recall, in the import-expert business and reluctant to look into people's futures. Nonetheless, I managed to persuade him to see me; in our half-hour meeting, he outlined the next fifteen years of my life.

What he told me has no place here; the fact that he has been proved correct certainly bears recording. I remember that the room—an ordinary living room—became almost abnormally still as Mr. Luck sat in an armchair across from me, his elbow on the arm of the chair, his forehead leaning on his fingertips, and began talking. I was also seated in a big armchair, and I recall the peculiar sensation of being removed in space and time—in a time tunnel, perhaps, stretching backwards and forwards, through which I was led by Mr. Luck's quiet, sometimes slightly hesitant phrases.

When the session was over, Courtney Luck's face was pale and drawn. Using his gift was obviously an exhausting experience for him and, having seen him at work, I can readily understand why those who possess the gift tend to be reluctant to use it. There are times, however—and all clairvoyants will tell you this—that seeing comes without being sought. Some classify this as a vision. By

and large, it appears that visions tend to be less exhausting.

The years went on rolling by, and the signs of the supranatural kept accumulating. Continent, country, social group, educational level, economic status—nothing seemed to make people immune from an awareness of witchcraft. The difference I did notice between people—and it was and is a marked difference—was that some discussed witchcraft openly, while others remained secretive.

In Macon, Georgia, I was introduced to a plump and pretty woman called Anjette. The introduction took place while I was dining at the restaurant she owned. Her conversation was mostly composed of rhapsodic talk about the man she referred to as "my sweetie," an airline pilot who was also a slight acquaintance of mine.

A few years later, in October, 1958, Anjette Donovan Lyles was convicted of the arsenic poisoning of her daughter. During the long and complicated trial, Anjette's voodoo practices came to light, and weird stories about black candles and socks with photographs in them, hung underneath her bed, began circulating. Since the photos in question were apparently photos of her "sweetie," he was understandably rumored to be staying away from all possible publicity.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, a small yet solid country that recently celebrated its thousandth anniversary, a medium who is also adept at reading cards is visited by many ladies of Luxembourg's high society. In Brazzaville, Africa, certain politicians will not make a move or a pronouncement without finding out whether the "spirits of the day" deem it propitious. In India, politics and astrology tend to go hand in hand.

But why go on? I have cited enough cases throughout the book. The point I wish to make here is that if I have bumped against so many signs of witchcraft in my life, it must follow that just about everybody else has, too. It is all a question of recognition—or definition.

This brings me to the question that is always leveled at

anyone who speaks or writes about witchcraft: do I believe in the existence of witches? Do I, as one good lady put it, have the temerity to think, in this day and age of progress and enlightened thought, that there are people who are born witches?

My answer is yes, I most certainly do. And my belief stands unqualified. It is the definition of witchcraft itself that receives qualifications.

I believe that there are people who are, unquestionably, born witches. They are people who, for some as yet unknown reason, have an extraordinary degree of sensitivity in their makeup. Perhaps they are people who are a billion-millionth more evolved than their non-witch brothers; perhaps some infinitesimal genetic variance enables them to tune in on waves unreceived by non-witches.

We still have much to learn about the human body. We are only on the threshold of understanding the intricacies of the human brain. Fond as we are of boasting about human progress in medical science during the last fifty years—and real as that progress has been—we still have a long, long way to go.

The normal human being has five known and recognized senses. Yet, for many generations, we have been referring to a sixth sense. Who can say definitely that we might not possess a potential seventh sense, or an eighth or even a ninth? Bees, it appears, seem to have seven, but we only found out about those two extra ones in recent years. Similarly, we may be in for some surprises when we are better able to analyze the mechanics of the human brain.

Incidentally, I would like to make it very clear that when I speak of witches I do not include satanists. There is no comparison between the two. A true witch is a gifted individual, a satanist is merely anti-clerical. He is also crowd-directed, somewhat like a sheep. Then, there is always the connection between the satanist and sexual perversion; this implies he *cannot* perform in a normal manner due to an implicit lack of basic sexuality.

Thus, his eroticism has to be aroused by the bizarre. He

needs the whip (whether literally or figuratively) to get himself going.

A witch, on the other hand, functions from within. There is no sexual perversion or deviation connected with witchcraft. High sexuality and sensuality—yes, in many cases. But the whips-chains-and-canes people, who have to go to such strenuous lengths to become aroused, will not be found among the ranks of the witches.

To put it colloquially, a witch swings from within. There is no need for unnatural goading.

Returning to the subject of the possibility of multiple, as yet undiscovered senses, I know a woman who, although not particularly psychic in the crystal-ball sense, can quite literally feel the presence of a spider in a room. Fortunately for her family, this perception is limited only to dangerous spiders.

I well recall the day when, on walking into the bedroom of a beach house, this woman turned pale and exited quickly. She refused point blank to enter the room again unless her husband agreed to find and remove the spider she *knew* was there. He went in to look around. Moments later, he was back.

"There is no spider in there. I've looked. Here—come see for yourself."

Nothing would persuade her to do so. Angrily, the husband returned to the room and, more to make a point than anything else, started to push the furniture around.

The exceptionally large tarantula that was found underneath one of the beds clinched the woman's spider-sensing reputation.

Mind you, this same woman has no fear of any other animals and will cheerfully handle snakes without a second thought. So there is no animal phobia involved.

Several people I have met can sense the coming of earthquakes before the tremors can be felt. The forewarning is described by some as a feeling of peculiar nausea; others say they feel a kind of apprehension. The latter tend to receive their pre-quake message as much as several days before the quake itself occurs.

To note still another interesting phenomenon—amber, which played a salient part in the discovery of electricity, has always been a magic component. Witchcraft, like electricity, may also be a positive-negative force of some kind, operating on a wavelength as yet to be identified. Much of it is comparable to an electrical circuit.

But I do feel it needs a completed circuit to operate, which is why harmful or evil witchcraft is not just a question of making a wax doll and sticking some pins into it. The intended victim must know a spell has been cast. What is more, he must fully believe in the power of the spell-caster. Otherwise, there is an interruption in the circuit.

Similarly, one can interrupt the course and movement of a seance glass if one does not believe. For if a person is skeptical of seances, he transmits his short-circuiting antagonism via his finger on the glass.

Getting away from the skeptics, though, I feel I should point out that the vast majority of the people who learned I was writing a book on witchcraft told me of witchcraft experiences they themselves had encountered. It was thus that I learned of a charming incident in Vermont.

The new owners of a farm wanted to dig a well. Accordingly, they engaged the services of the best water-finding and well-digging outfit in the area. Technicians with impressive equipment came to the farm, used their instruments, and dug a well.

Or, more accurately, they tried to dig a well. All they dug was a hole. There was no water.

So the farm owners dispensed with the services of the experts, listened to their neighbors' advice—and hired the local witch-team instead. It took the witches less than a day—and yes, the farm now has a dandy well.

I learned about another unusual incident in New York City. This one involved the Handkerchief Lady murder case. Apparently, the police had not been able to track down the killer. But he was by no means safe. In fact, the murdered woman's spirit contacted him during a seance he attended and he was so terrified by the spirit's cry of

"You killed me! You killed me!" that he eventually committed suicide, shooting himself with a .22 caliber pistol.

Week after week, month after month, the news media all over the world carry more and more items related to witchcraft. One may easily assume that the skeptical may well be growing less in number.

But should any reader still feel, like Shakespeare's Horatio, that "O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!" perhaps he can also feel the human wish for quest, for discovery and above all for further knowledge of that which we do not yet understand.

Or perhaps the reader already agrees with Hamlet, who answered Horatio by saying:

> And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

THE END

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